ITALIAN TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE

COLIN R. COOTE

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ON THE ROAD TO CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

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BY

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PREFACE

THE incidents and reflections noted down in the following pages are the result of nearly a year's service on the Italian front during the war, and of two years in the slightly less dangerous but equally exciting capacity of a Roman citizen.

The writer makes no pretence of originality in matters of fact, for such a claim would be pretentious even for a journalist. The utmost he hopes is that he has achieved some small originality of observation of very old things; for the spur of his profession must galvanize into activity even a mind overlaid by the calculated sleepiness of a Balliol education, and give it the right to repeat Homer's synopsis of the life of Odysseus:

"πολλῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων πολιεῖς ἴδεν καὶ νόον ἔγνω."

His (the writer's) thanks are due, apart from those mentioned in the text, to Cardinal Gasquet for permission to use his researches into the history of the early English Pilgrims in Rome, and to the proprietors of "The Times" newspaper for permission to incorporate or to use the articles written for them by one who must be eternally grateful for their tolerance of his inexperience.

ROME C.R.C.
May 1925

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ITALIAN TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE ITALIAN PEOPLE

IN the course of this attempt to describe the features, grave and gay, of life in the Italian towns and country, I shall have to define in their proper place the respective characteristics of the dweller in the city and the dweller on the land. This division is not, however, exhaustive; for apart from those whom a long tradition as citizens of City States has definitely branded as townsfolk, and those whom a still longer tradition of painful cultivation has stamped as tillers of the soil, the differences between Italians are many and real, and do not correspond to any such general distinction. If, therefore, I begin with some remarks upon the Italian nation as a whole, the reader must take for granted the reservations consequent upon the existence of so many different races and tribes which happen to inhabit the same peninsula, and must not imagine that, in picking out one or two common characteristics, I am misled by, or that I approve of, the loose habit of writing and uttering generalities about "nations."

No people, perhaps, possesses a greater ethnological variety than the Italians; and in almost every way no people is less a single nation. It is a pleasing exercise of the fancy to take a walk through Rome, or, better still, to take a seat outside some café and let Rome walk past. The tall, fair-haired man,

with the rather flat features, is perhaps a Goth. The little red-haired, square-built fellow, with whiskers sprouting from unlikely crevices, is certainly a Lombard. The dark gentleman with the snub nose is one of the Emperor Gratian's Scythian archers in mufti. The person with the liquid eye, the huge hooked nose, and the gymnastic shoulders belongs to a yet older and more ubiquitous race, thoroughly at home in this country of gesticulation. The two tall, bronzed, dignified aristocrats are Albanian peasants from the villages of the south, and the four tiny mannikins behind them, chattering in hissing Greek, come from the settlements in Sicily, founded before Rome was. The ruminating, sloe-eyed girl with blue-black hair like an inkstain upon her shapely head is a Saracen from the Sorrento peninsula, or from Liguria, a descendant of the corsairs who

> Dared the white republics up the coast of Italy,
> And dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the Sea,

and who terrorized the Italian Riviera for centuries, penetrating even to the Alpine passes to sack the monasteries. The catalogue of the Acts of the Apostles is completed by a native soldier from " the parts of Libya about Cyrene." The leaven that leaveneth the whole lump is the small, dark type—keen-faced, quick-eyed, lithe, and dramatic, which is known by the name of Italian.

Study their faces. Every one might be that of an emperor or a waiter. You may see replicas in marble in the sculptured busts of the Roman Cæsars in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, or by thousands in the flesh in the countless cafés, bars, *trattorie*, and hotels, which litter a country where the number of foreign visitors is only exceeded by the number of the natives who live on them. And the last element in the Roman crowd is a swarm of adorable children, gravely conducted by mountainous mammas in decrepit fiacres. The ample maternal folds so overwhelm the dusty cushions that it seems impossible for anything else to live on the same seat. But there are tiny, bright-eyed mites wedged into the curves of those immense forms, and looking inquisitively

out upon the world. Truly the whole is greater than the part! Some of them, fair and fairy-like, make one understand the interest of the great Gregory in similar infants which led to St. Augustine's mission to Britain.

The Italians remain children all their lives. It is this which makes them at once so charming and so exasperating, for, like the little girl in the nursery rhyme, "When they are good, they are very very good, and when they are bad they are horrid." They combine great delicacy of feeling with an absurd touchiness. The Italian Press, for example, is an adept at the game of "Heads I win, tails you lose." It permits itself to attribute to other nations a morality and a policy which could only have been imagined by Machiavelli in collaboration with the Malignant Deity of Descartes; but should these insinuations arouse the mildest protest in their victims—a courteous reference, for example, to people in glass houses—a proud nation, it would appear, has been grossly wounded in its honour, a race of gentlemen insulted by the *canaille*, and for some time a national of the offending State is made to feel a low-down cad.

A young man came to Italy in the early days of Fascismo, when in the enthusiasm of victory young Italy was talking of the revival of the Roman Empire, and making significant references to the "Italianita" of Malta. He ventured to hint in the columns of a British newspaper that such talk was wild nonsense, and those guilty of it would grow wiser when they were more experienced. The suggestion that the saviours of Italy were not perfect supermen caused grave commotion, and for some hours it was debated whether the writer in question was dangerous or merely mad. Finally, the latter and more generous hypothesis was adopted, and he was magnanimously allowed to remain in the country. But ever since he has laboured against the suspicion that he is incurably anti-Italian.

They are incredibly proud, and their pride is sometimes indistinguishable from conceit. I do not refer to the speeches of politicians, a tribe notoriously given to exaggeration of their own virtues the world over, whose Italian representatives

are merely a little more fulsome than their brothers in other countries. But every Italian not only considers himself the finest type extant of *homo sapiens* ; he also says so on any or no provocation. Other nations have probably the same opinion of themselves, but most have the grace to pretend, at least, to modesty. There is a type of Englishman, for example, who displays a fiendish ingenuity in proving that his country is always in the wrong, and generally deliberately immoral ; but no Italian will ever admit for a second that he or his country has ever made a mistake. When the Italian fleet bombarded Corfu in September, 1923, one might have thought that some voice would have acknowledged the action to be a blunder, if not a crime. On the contrary, even the opposition Press refused to take what in our country would have been considered a golden opportunity, and outvied the Government organs in whole-hearted applause. There are still better instances. The part which Italy played in the war has been infamously traduced. The disaster of Caporetto is remembered, while the eleven battles of the Isonzo, each a miniature Somme, are forgotten, and the heroism of the Italian soldier is unjustifiably obscured by the successes of Italian defeatism. Still, Caporetto was undoubtedly a disaster of the first magnitude, and it does no harm to admit a fact which merely enhances the value of the magnificent national recovery afterwards. The Italians, however, have almost convinced themselves that it was a military victory, and are quite sure that it was a moral triumph. That extraordinary creature D'Annunzio, the hero of passionate and somewhat incoherent ideals and of passionate and all too coherent gallantries, has constructed a pergola in his garden on every one of whose pillars is inscribed the name of an Italian victory. The pillar of Caporetto is there.

This topsy-turvydom is found not only in *détraqués* of the D'Annunzio stamp, but also in sober statesmen. The late Oscar Browning, who lived in Rome for so many years, conceived the idea after the war of founding an Italian School of Political Science. He felt that administrative

ability was not the Italian's strong point, and he urged in the proper quarter that the territorial extensions which the war had secured would demand a new type of thoroughly trained official. The reply he received was astounding. "The Italian nation," he was informed, "which has shown the courage necessary to conquer these territories, can well find the genius to administer them." After this it is hardly necessary to follow the extravagances of more modern statesmen; but the reader will find some exceptionally magnificent pretensions in the Fascista hymns. For example, the chorus of "Giovinezza" concludes—

Nel Fascismo è salvezza
della nostra liberta.

In prose it is possible to say many things of Fascismo, but never that it has "guaranteed liberty."

Nevertheless this supreme conceit has something admirable in it. It gives the Italians a vocal national force and unity which, if it were invariably followed by corresponding action, would perhaps make them what they claim to be. Its origin is most interesting. The Italian considers himself in very truth the heir of Rome, and though the only foundation for the belief is geographical, it exists, and the realist must take account of its effects both upon Italian character and policy. It is due to what is known as the Latin tradition. In this country was centred the universal and unquestioned temporal power of the Roman Empire. When that was destroyed by ambitious generals of barbarian origin its main idea survived and was transformed into the universal and unquestioned spiritual dominion of the Papacy. The Reformation is so distant, and its history has been so distorted by the bias of partizan writers, that it is forgotten with what reluctance and even misgivings the early Protestant leaders arrayed themselves against the heir of St. Peter. It is forgotten that a few short centuries before the Pope had armed all Christendom against the infidel, and, *corruptio optimi pessima*, the urge of his spiritual authority had sent even children to die by the hundred thousand on the plains of

Hungary in the so-called "Children's Crusade." There lives ever in Italy the tradition of "Authority," the conception of a people marked out by talent to rule the world in every branch of human activity; and it is this tradition and conception which produces, among other extraordinary results, the intense national pride of the Italians. It would seem as if Vergil's command *regere imperio populos* had survived in despite of the fifteen hundred years during which the "peoples" have ruled the Romans. It also produces internally that belief in the omnipotence of Government, coupled with an entire negligence of its orders, which would make the Italian equally astonished if he did not see or if he obeyed the notice not to smoke in a tram-car.

In great things, as in little, he is the same. The poorest country in Europe has by far the largest Ministry of Finance. The worst public service has the most elaborate regulations; though it is only fair to add that the Fascisti have seriously disturbed the lethargy of the bureaucracy. A technically perfect judiciary is so slow in its operations that there are three persons awaiting trial for every one undergoing sentence. And last, but not least, the most undemocratic of countries has, on paper, achieved a perfect frenzy of democratic development. There may be—there are—some Italians who really grasp the spirit of the British and French parliamentary system from which they have copied and applied the salient features, but they are in a vast minority.

Italy is, in fact, the last stronghold of the conception of Authority as opposed to Democracy. Ever since her union she has been governed by a dictatorship more or less concealed. Cavour is followed by Crispi; Crispi by Giolitti; Giolitti by Mussolini. Each is supreme, though each has adopted different methods. The only difference between Giolitti and Mussolini is that the former preferred to rule through puppets, and for fifteen years he played upon the different political parties as upon the keys of a piano, but never allowed any discord which could hide the central theme of his authority. Mussolini prefers to rule in person, and his tune is the crashing chords of a claimed and admitted personal

supremacy. Both have succeeded, because the first instinct of an Italian is to look to his Government, and the more decidedly it speaks the better he is pleased. It is certainly easier to rule such a people than one which is instinctively "agin' the Government." The Italian rulers can always count on that *buono popolo*—that good-hearted proletariat—to excuse their mistakes. For if the Italian has the faults of a child, he has also its virtues. I do not know in which category to include the most popularly admired quality, described by the adjective *furbo*, for which "cunning" is an inadequate equivalent, though the French *fin* means much the same thing. It is used of a man who has the best of a bargain by dint of superior cleverness, who masks his ambitions under a cloak of imbecility, only to reveal them at the proper moment with resounding effect. Any occasion is good enough for the display of this quality, from the purchase of a pair of socks to the formation of a conspiracy to overthrow the Government. In both cases there is the same portentous and rather transparent secrecy. I firmly believe that if the Government discovered a dangerous secret society to-morrow they would not arrest the members, but form a counter-secret society to combat it, as being the most complicated and therefore the cleverest mode of procedure. This cleverness or cunning is a doubtful quality, because it legitimizes sometimes proceedings of imperfect honesty. But, after all, who can resist joining in the laugh against the purchaser of an "original Raphael," which dates from no earlier than last year? These methods are not confined to Italy. I know a furniture dealer in Paris who has just sold the ten thousandth bed in which Marie Antoinette once slept, and when I read of one of those "bargains" I am always reminded of the pleasant mediaeval habit of selling nails and fragments from the True Cross. The purveyors of such objects would still find a market in Italy. For that there should be so many reputations for cleverness argues the existence of at least an equal number of simpletons.

Indeed, for all his show of finesse, simplicity, though not stupidity, forms a large part of the Italian's character. In a

country where for four months a torrid sun smites fiercely through dust clouds on his devoted head he is the soberest of all Europeans. Rarely will you see a drunkard. The cynic will remark that the explanation is the nastiness of the Italian wine, and, I confess, to a northern palate its taste is filthy. But the Italian sobriety is the result of moderation, not of dislike. He enjoys his glass of wine, the heavy, blue-black liquid of the North, or the amber, musty fire of the Campagna. It is fierce and heady stuff, as the British Army which came to Italy after Caporetto well knows. The horror on the faces of a group of privates, accustomed to the light nectar of France, when, on their first Italian night at Isola della Scala, they found their brains turning and their legs wobbling, before even the primary thirst was quenched, is vivid in my memory. But the beer is divine, and takes one back to the days of 1914, when Beer was still Beer in Britain.

Those, therefore, who took part in the Italian campaign of 1917–18 will realize how great a quality is this Italian sobriety. Perhaps it is because when a man meets his friends at the *trattoria* he has so much to say that he has no time to drink. Certainly he has no need of artificial stimulants, and has enough innate excitement to dispense with the Bacchic frenzy. For he is endowed with a precocious quickness and intelligence, superficial perhaps, but very engaging, which makes him a delightful companion and a brilliant conversationalist, and gives him, besides, certain sterling practical qualities. The Italians are magnificent engineers, and it is they who have carried out some of the most difficult engineering feats in the world; witness the tunnels through the Alps and the roads up to Asiago. They are capable at the shortest notice of producing the most complete plan for the organization or accomplishment of any project you please. They tire of it quickly, and desire often outruns performance, but there is nothing they are afraid to try.

The most typical phenomenon of this side of their character is afforded by the huge edifices which sprang up in and around Rome during the speculative fever which ruined so many after 1870. The reader will find a brilliant account of this

temporary insanity in Zola's " Rome." From the fact that Rome had become once again the capital of a united Italy it was immediately concluded that her population would leap up to that of the imperial city. For miles around the humble city of the Popes building lots changed hands at fantastic prices, and houses sprang up like mushrooms. Here comes in the genius of the Italian. His idea, though misconceived, was absolutely logical, and he believed in it thoroughly. His object was to have houses ready for the mass of people whose arrival was imminent—houses which he already saw with his mind's eye, white, shining, magnificent. With utterly inadequate supplies of labour and materials he actually accomplished the miracle. The Italian workman's uncanny skill in the manipulation of stucco hid all serious defects. The houses were created. Then the people failed to come, the houses became the abiding places of cats and beggars, the stucco peeled mournfully from the walls, and what were intended as centres of happy life became dismal cemeteries of dirt and stench.

And, lastly, there is the best of all Italian qualities, their adoration of children. I have never seen any Italian be unkind to a child ; on the contrary, he spoils them all, and more especially his own. I would not say that he is a perfect husband, for he shares the peculiarities of most Southern and Catholic nations, where there is a hot climate and no divorce. These aberrations from strict morality are treated largely as a matter of course. But he is a wonderful father, and there is no more pleasing sight than the family party taking the air on Sunday. The families are themselves enormous, but very seldom querulous, however hot, and the good citizen with a white-clad mite on each arm looks the picture of contentment The children show by their every action a complete absence of the fear of grown-ups. The other day I was walking down near the Portico of Octavia, in a street flanked by workmen's houses, before which was a raised pavement with steps leading down to the street level. As usual, pavement and steps were swarming with children in various degrees of rags and dirt, for love does

not extend to cleanliness. One, more adventurous than the rest, had staggered out into the road, and was engaged in the fascinating pursuit of poking out the mud from between the cobbles with its fingers. A huge lorry roared past, missing the child by the fraction of an inch. It never stirred, except to bend yet farther forward to examine a particularly luscious crevice. Suddenly a raucous shriek from the nearest doorway caused me to leap into the air. A huge matron, presumably the mother, was addressing a remonstrance to her offspring, which was the Italian equivalent of the famous phrase, " If you do that again, I'll kill you." The child was quite unmoved, and, honour and maternal care being alike satisfied, the matron retired into the murky interior of her domain.

The Italians love children, not only in the individual, but in the mass. Nowhere are the doctrines of Dr. Marie Stopes more scorned, and the reverse conception of the value to the State of large families more universally held. It is a stock phrase with the Italian orator that the chief wealth of Italy is her teeming population ; and the fact of its teeming is truer than most of his other statements. The population has increased by ten and a half millions in the last fifty years, and to this figure should be added a further three and a half millions, which represent the net emigration over the same period. The fecundity of the people is a source of immense national pride—a fact all the more astonishing when it is recalled what a constant preoccupation to the Italian Government is this very question of emigration. It is not too much to say that it colours the whole of Italian foreign policy, and that the general contentment of the people is largely dependent upon the maintenance of a regular outflow of emigrants, for the habit of going abroad is deeply rooted in their character. From the fact than the British Empire occupies most of the empty spaces of the earth, the old saying *Guerra con tutto il mondo, ma pace con Inghilterra* has acquired a new significance. The *fecondita Italiana* is therefore not without its drawbacks. But perhaps the father who observes his small son, in company with some thousands of other boys, all complete with black fez, black shirt, breeches, leggings, and

boots, stepping it bravely in the ranks of the Ballilla has a thrill of pride which dulls the prick of economic difficulties.

From the youngest to the oldest all love dressing up. Look at this procession coming down the Corso on its way to the Piazza Colonna, there to greet " Il Duce " on his return from a tour in the North. Right in front is a vivid splash of scarlet where hobbles proudly a Garibaldi veteran. Behind march rows and rows of Fascista Militia officers with rows and rows of medals. Behind again are the various Fascista sections, resplendent in black shirts, with gay flags waving above, " terrible as an army with banners." A sombre standard of deep purple bears pinned to it the gold medals of those who have won the highest of all decorations for military valour. And last comes a company of the small heroes of the Ballilla and the Avanguardisti, the Fascista Boy Scouts, their small bosoms bursting with pride at being of that noble and noisy array. Rather fine are the instructions issued to those who are on that day to address, in countless squares and cities, the representatives of Young Italy. " You shall explain to them," say these instructions, " how Rome developed from a City State and became mistress of the world by Discipline, Daring, and Work ; how the new Italy will do the same by Discipline, Daring, and Work. And when you speak to them do not read your words, but hold your head high. For he who speaks to the little ones must look them in the face."

There are many other aspects of the Italian character, but they are local rather than general. If the reader has grasped the one essential fact that in dealing with Italians he is dealing with a race of children, he will cease to be astonished at much which happens in Italy. For young as is the nation, its heart is yet younger, full of unbridled enthusiasms, vague passions, and noble sentiments ; capable of the greatest heights, and also of the greatest depths. The Italians are not far wrong when they make D'Annunzio the type of the nation. There is a terribly dark side to his character, but he is also the man who by his single eloquence swept his country into the war. He is the man who, at an age when

most would be calling for carpet slippers and an easy chair, flew in an aeroplane from Venice to Vienna. He is the author of the " Virgini delle Rocce " and the " Citta Morta " ; and also of the babbling nonsense of the " Notturno," and the " Per l'Italia degli Italiani."

CHAPTER II

THE THREE ITALIES

IT only remains in this foreword to make the important distinction between the three Italies—the North, the Centre, and the South—between Italy of the twentieth, Italy of the fifteenth, and Italy of the tenth century respectively. There are certain striking differences of type, language, and temperament between the people of these three divisions. The Northerner is a small, dark type, prone to early rotundity, and with something almost Japanese in his rather stubby features and beady eyes. He speaks with a quick, metallic accent, and his gestures are short and sharp. He is the modern and energetic element in Italy. Some forty years ago, I am told, Piedmont and Lombardy were sleepy; Venetia gay and idle. Industry was a domestic concern, carried on by the people in their own houses. They were good workers in metal and homespun cloth. Then came the penetrating German and saw this virgin commercial field. He studied the class of articles produced by this laborious home industry, and reproduced them for half the price in his factories. But the native, with his usual intelligence, was quick to grasp the lessons of mass production. Labour was, and still is, incredibly cheap and extremely efficient; and thus came into being that industrial civilization, which, in a quarter of a century, has made such miraculous strides that to-day the Italian output of manufactured goods makes her almost self-supporting and a serious competitor in the markets of the world.

The story has a romance all its own, and the growth of Italian industry had, besides, the most important political repercussions. If it has ever occurred to any reader to ask why Italy, which owed her freedom to so great an extent to France, and whose traditional enemy was Austria, should

nevertheless have entered into a Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany, he will probably have been satisfied with the answer that Italy was following her traditional policy of marching with the biggest battalions. But this is only half the truth. The Triple Alliance was economic rather than political, and was entered into by Italy mainly in order to set her infant industries upon their legs. No doubt her partners in the alliance cherished other ideals, and the measure of their delusion, as of the true feelings of Italy, was their rage at the prompt declaration of Italian neutrality in August, 1914. In previous years, however, the Austro-German peaceful penetration had been considerable. There were a number of Italo-German marriages in the highest Roman society ; the foremen, and many of the skilled artisans were German, and even a proportion of the unskilled workmen were German or Austrian. I well remember that on the journey across the plain from Este to Bassano in November, 1917, the British Army came to a village inhabited entirely by German-speaking people, living, or rather existing, in the most miserable conditions, but indisputably free, within fifty miles of the front line. They told me that they were workmen who had been weeded out from the factories and sent to live there until the war was over. To-day it is still the fashion to have German or Austrian domestic servants, and the return of the German to the North is as evident as the return of the German tourist.

It must not be thought, however, that the Northerner is dependent upon foreign instruction nor purely imitative, for he has immense initiative of his own ; and his continued relations with Germany are simply a question of buying raw materials in the cheapest market. For the marvel of the Northern industrial civilization is that it exists in a land which produces not an ounce of iron, and which is forced to import practically the whole of its coal. The sole natural advantage of Italy is her supply of " white coal," or cheap electrical power, furnished by the mountain torrents running down from the Alps ; but this at the moment supplies only about half her power needs. In spite of these natural handi-

caps she has developed a huge motor-car industry, producing cars of a very high quality, and has a large output of other articles of manufactured steel. The textile industry has also advanced by leaps and bounds, and at a time when Lancashire was suffering gravely from unemployment the Italian cotton industry had orders sufficient to keep it fully occupied for six months ahead. It is roughly accurate to say that Italy can now supply her home needs and is beginning to export. She is also making a strong effort to produce her own supplies of raw materials, and her experiments in cotton growing in her African colonies, notably in Eritrea, are not the least interesting evidences of a considered and concise industrial policy. This is not an economic treatise, but the bare statement of the success of the Northerner in establishing his economic independence is necessary to the appreciation of the energy and initiative of his character.

The Piedmontese, indeed, have been trained in the fire of tribulation and nurtured in the ideal of independence. Those who advance the theory that mankind is divided into people of the plains and people of the mountains, and contend that the latter monopolize the sturdy qualities of the human race, will here find some support for their argument. From the time when Humbert Whitehands, the ancestor of the House of Savoy, established his sway over the triangle Geneva, Chambéry, Turin, there has always been in those mountains the jealously and perilously preserved nucleus of a free State. For centuries the Counts of Savoy maintained their independence by an effective, if none too scrupulous, policy of playing off the Empire against the Papacy, the Empire—and subsequently Spain—against France, and finally France against Austria. It was a policy imposed by circumstances upon a pygmy living amid giants, and it succeeded because the pygmy always had the courage to avoid a pusillanimous neutrality. It was acquitted of the charge of treachery, thanks to its frankness. For example, the Treaty which Charles Emmanuel III concluded with Maria Theresa in 1742 expressly stipulated that the Duke should be free to join her enemies whenever he thought fit; and this unique clause

seems to have been accepted as a matter of course by the empress. Only once had Piedmont frankly to confess herself beaten; and that was when she succumbed to the devastating tide of the French revolutionary armies. But she arose the stronger from this ephemeral "liberation," and it was her courage in facing Austria alone which transformed the vague wish of Napoleon III, "Faire quelque chose pour l'Italie," into the solid fact of the French Army.

Freedom and unity came to Italy from the North, spreading slowly east and south from the Alps, without much help or encouragement save from individual Southern heroes; and this gift of a united nationality has been almost reluctantly accepted by those who have benefited from it. At least there survives a certain antagonism between the North and the rest of the country. The Southerner affects to despise the Piedmontese, as the aristocrat looks down upon the bourgeois. It may be said of the South as was said of Greece, that "she saw the legions thunder past, and turned to thought again," only "thought" in her case should read "sleep." I suspect that the root cause of this feeling is some secret shame that the said bourgeois should have succeeded where the aristocrat failed. In so far as it has any justification, it arises from a contemplation of the somewhat shady nature of the modern Italian financier. But in any case this antagonism is year by year on the wane as identity of interest between all Italians becomes more and more manifest, and the great problem of the North is one for all Italy. For in the Italia Redenta, won back by the great war, there is a large foreign population. The German settlements of the upper Adige valley and the Slav population of Istria are a little indigestible, and Italy has in new dominions on an infinitely smaller scale the same problem as the old Austrian Empire had in Italy herself.

No one who has journeyed through the great cities of the North can have failed to be struck by their teeming activity, or to have been amazed by the inspiring loveliness of the frame of this centre of industrialism. As the electric train rolls down from the Mont Cenis to Turin the traveller sees on

his left the awful panorama of the Alps, the glittering white of the peaks merging into the sombre purples of the middle distance, and swelling into the gracious green of the foothills. The plain through which he journeys is dotted with dull red farm-houses, and tidily printed with big square fields, some green with growing crops, some richly vermilion with the fat swathes thrown up by the plough. The immediate view is obscured by the delicate lattice work of the vines trailing from poplar to poplar or from elm to elm, and forming enviably productive hedges.

Thus it is with a miraculous suddenness that he finds himself on the outskirts of a big red-and-white city. The square brick monstrosities with their indecent exposure of staircases and their parallel rows of ambiguous washing are workmen's flats. From every primitive balcony of rusty iron smiling women in gaily coloured dresses give a greeting with a curiously artificial gesture of the hand, which is waved vertically with open palm, like the flipper of a walrus. Beyond the flats come the long, low lines of the factories, like greenhouses of brick and corrugated iron, their slanting roofs covered from end to end with the huge letters of their titles. The Italians are prone to baptize their undertakings with immensely long names, which remind one of similar alphabetical mazes in Wales. Thus one sees the Fabbrica Italiana di Automobili di Torino, and it comes as a shock to realize that this is one's old friend FIAT in court dress. For no one in ordinary conversation ever thinks of pronouncing these tongue-twisters, and the sources of Italy's wealth are cavalierly addressed by a name compounded from the initial letters of their component parts. The effect is sometimes rather funny, much as if we referred to the House of Commons as HOC, or, if we wished to be pompous, as MOP (Mother of Parliaments).

The factories and blocks of flats give an outward impression of cleanliness, which the latter, at least, often contradict upon closer acquaintance; but the outskirts both of Turin and Milan are horribly untidy and unfinished. There is a strict disregard of beauty in favour of utility, and the town-

planning seems to be extremely haphazard. However, there is plenty of room, and not too desperate a housing problem. The Italian workman is content with very little, though he suffers from the extreme cold of winter and the extreme heat of summer; and a mild brand of communism still survives from the red domination of 1920, when the factories at Turin were occupied by the workmen in a rather pathetically muddled attempt to work them for themselves. On the whole, however, the Italian is content with his utility flat, his simple diet of farinaceous foods, and his low wage, which amounts even for the skilled mechanic to between thirty-five and forty shillings per week of our money. The standard of living is perhaps slightly higher since the war, and the Italian's contact with the meat-eating races has given him a taste for a heavier diet when he can afford it. The despised and execrated bully beef had a welcome in Italy which would have caused it to jump out of its tin with surprise had it been ordinarily capable of movement. The people of the north have, at any rate, a better-fed appearance than other Italians, for they are richer; and begging is not the profession of any large percentage.

And when you stand on the rim of the great mountains which girdle the northern plain you can see that the land is richer too, and can understand the irresistible attraction which called the invader from less hospitable climes, and brought him panting for the sack of such riches over the frozen passes. It is worth a pilgrimage, such as our own King and Queen made from the Italian side in 1923, up the magnificent road which loops and swirls its way over the crest to Asiago.

The start is from the little red city of Vicenza, built upon that tendril of the foothills which adventures farthest into the plain, and so down a straight, flat, dusty road, between hedges of trailing vines, and fields of tall, ungracious maize. Suddenly you come upon the stony bed of the Astico, a fierce mountain river of clear green water, split into endless channels, each engaged in a quarrel with the dividing banks of smooth, white pebbles, shining like heaps of bones beneath the glaring

sun. The noise of these quarrelling streams is the only indication that this arid expanse is a river, for the water is low and cannot be seen until you stand actually on the bridge. Away on the left there rises above the flooring of the vines, standing out in proud purity against the foothills, and backed by the lowering peaks, still snow-capped, of the mountains which divide the Astico from the Brenta, the Cross of Sacrifice of the cemetery of Montecchio. It is perhaps the loveliest of all the sixty-three burial grounds in which rest the British who died in Italy, and it is certainly the saddest. For here lie those who had the strength to struggle down from the mountains in the last torturing hope of the wounded man for life and peace ; and here is the dumb record of how that hope of life was blotted out. But they have found peace in this green, quiet spot. The cross stands out over the dry, sunny bed of the Astico, so dead and arid, and over the rich plain of Vicenza, so full of life and growth ; so that the very scenery teaches the sad but glorious lesson that new life and hope is found only beside, and because of, death and sacrifice.

The road swings left towards the cross, and the approach is by a shady lane, past the wall of the little village cemetery, ever strewn with fresh flowers. Just above and adjacent is the military cemetery, surrounded by a low wall of rough-hewn masonry with a coping of the dull local marble, " Chiampo Perla." Within are the graves of four hundred and thirty-nine British soldiers in ordered rows, without distinction of rank. The regiments are not separated, but on each stone is chiselled the regimental crest, with the soldier's name, number, and the date of his death below. Each regiment has also a special form of cross, chosen during the war by the regiment itself. The graves are interspaced by five aisles of fine, smooth turf. The centre aisle leads up to the altar or Stone of Remembrance, reached by a flight of broad white steps ; and behind, in a square recess, stands the tall cross, hung with a Crusader's sword. On either flank is a small stone shelter, capped with a red-tiled pointed roof.

The cemetery is gay with flowers. The long, narrow beds

in front of the headstones are a mass of roses and mountain pinks, and the bank leading down to the civilian cemetery is bright with the blue of irises. A solitary weeping willow stands sentinel at the entrance to the cross, and, behind, an Italian inscription is fixed to the wall, which reads: "The soil of this cemetery has been given by the Italian people to be the eternal resting-place of the soldiers of the Allied Armies fallen in the War of 1914–1918, who are here honoured." Cross, altar, and headstones are cut out of the pure white stone of Schio. Loving hearts have caused special messages of honour and remembrance to be carved on the base of some of the stones, but the cross is blank, save for the sword, and the altar bears only the proud promise, "Their name liveth for evermore."

On leaving this holy ground, the road swings up through Lonedo, where the Prince of Wales was once stationed with British G.H.Q., over the first swell of the foothills to Lugo, and thence down the Astico valley to Caltrano, shelled by the Austrian batteries in 1916 from the great snow mountains which wall in the valley from the north. Up their barren slopes there may still be perceived the track of the dizzy motor roads constructed by the Italian engineers with something of Roman pertinacity and skill. The necessarily slender volume of traffic was augmented in war time by a diabolical invention called the "Teleferica," a little wooden platform slung on an electric wire, which carried shells, stores, and sometimes even a man from the plain to the mountain top. There was once an officer who, having overstayed a day's leave in the plain upon urgent private affairs, thought to regain the hour by which he was late by getting himself hoisted in this way to his eyrie. Unluckily, the current failed when he was half-way up, and the unfortunate, whose head was already none too clear, was perched upon a plank two feet by one foot over nothingness for several hours.

The main road now corkscrews up the mountain-side, through those rich pastures which give their name to the Alps, to a desolation of rock and scrub as savage as the

BRITISH CEMETERY AT MAGNABOSCHI

terrible Carso. Then it swings over the lip of the Asiago saucer, and in a moment the traveller has passed from Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained. Rock and scrub give way to rolling hummocks of grass, and the encircling hills are heavy with the tall graciousness of pines. But before going on it is worth while to pause and look south. Away to the left is a bright glimmer and a dark smudge. They are the Adriatic and Venice. Below a velvet country-side stretches unendingly to the horizon. From its bosom rise the slender towers of the campanile, which every village is moved to raise as a symbol of its faith and as sentinel of its safety; and across it run the straight, white ribbons of the roads and the ardent, silver streaks of the Tagliamento, the Piave, the Brenta, the Astico, and the Adige. Away to the right, a darker blur, is the city of Verona. One hundred and fifty miles east and west, and one hundred miles south stretches the great plain, and as one gazes on its loveliness and riches one can understand why Italy has ever lured the conqueror and the tourist.

On runs the road through the pinewoods and out on to the pasture-lands round Asiago city. Just where it leaves the trees there is a small mound, called "Cunico Hill," once the advanced post of the British lines, whence on June 15, 1918, "B" Company of the 5th Gloucesters watched the Austrian divisions pouring out of the gloomy Val d'Assa and over the green slopes to defeat and death in the last offensive battle of the Hapsburg Empire. Yet the victor paid a price, for nine out of every ten tombstones in the mountain cemeteries bear that fatal date. Boscon, Berenthal, Magnaboschi have each its gallant company sleeping in a little cup-shaped valley, and their resting-places are oases of tidiness among the tangled rocks. The pines grow sparsely —one might almost say reverently—down the hill-side, and an army of them crowns every summit. From year's end to year's end there is no sound in those high places but the wind sighing through the trees and the shrill call of the rare shepherd to his dog. Such is Italy of the North, and such are its guardians.

CHAPTER III

CENTRAL ITALY

IF I have dwelt for some time upon Italy of the North it is because its people are the spear-point of the nation, from whom, if from any section of the Italians, will come the moving spirit of every advance in power and national efficiency. And yet the Centre has some claims to lead the nation in the æsthetic field. It is the Italy of the Renaissance, whose scenery, unchanged and unchanging, formed the background of the masterpieces of mediaeval art, so that one continually expects to meet a group of figures from the frescoes of Gozzoli or the canvases of Raphael. Green hillsides, with rows of formal poplars and pines, a vision of rich cultivation with here and there a suggestion of bleakness, seem to call for slashed doublets, Madonna faces framed in golden hair-nets, and perhaps the tragically gorgeous figure of the Emperor John II, Palæologus, whose mission to the West in desperate search of Christian succour against the Turk was lost in the bogs of an obscure religious controversy, so that it exposed only the feebleness of the East and the selfishness of the West, but brought the latter a greater and unconscious gift of the revival of classical Greek learning. From this spark, so strangely lighted, blazed the glory of the Tuscan City States, so different from the fighting Dukedoms of the North.

There is a yet older tradition of civilization in Etruria, which may amuse the speculative talent of the historian. The fashionable theory is that Rome was the northern outpost of the Confederated Latin Tribes, established to prevent the inroads of the Etruscans. It is, of course, certain that the Roman kings of the Tarquin dynasty were Etruscan, and that when they were driven out the Etruscan power, in the person of Lars Porsena, did attack and—alas for the romance

of Horatius Cocles!—did take Rome. Perhaps some of the hostility towards the Tarquins, and the rabid hatred ever afterwards displayed by the Romans towards the name of "King," arose from the fact that the Tarquins and their system signified the rule of foreign autocrats. Rome survived the fall of the Etruscan Empire, because the force of the Gallic invasion which destroyed the latter at the beginning of the fourth century B.C. was partly spent by the time it reached the Tiber, and the fortress of the capitol was just strong enough to weary the not very persistent and entirely aimless barbarians.

Whether Rome was the bulwark against Etruria or not, it is certain that the Etruscan civilization reached a very high level, and that some of the indigenous arts which were possessed by the Romans before their military prowess made the city the centre of all the arts were directly derived therefrom, and acquired by early conquests of Etruscan cities.[1] But whence did this Etruscan Art itself come? Most of the subjects of so-called Etruscan work are taken from Greek mythology, and the most commonly accepted theory is that the whole civilization had a Greek or Mycenæan or Levantine origin. Traces of this theory are found in the Æneid, wherein of course Vergil's object is to trace back to Trojan origins the mighty civilized power just consolidated under the hand of Augustus.

But there is another and more interesting speculation, which hinges upon the possible explanation of the problem presented by the sudden appearance of bronze in the prehistoric world. There is the universal tradition that the art of working in bronze was imported into, not indigenous to, the countries where its use is first definitely ascertained. The Etruscans were one of a number of bronze-using peoples, which extended from Yucatan to Egypt, and whose productions manifest an astonishing similarity. The theory is that

[1] It is a rather remarkable fact that though the Etruscans were a seafaring people their important cities were all inland, and the fact is not accounted for by fear of pirates, for the Etruscans themselves were the pirates. May it not be ascribed to a fear of the sea, originating in the tidal waves which overwhelmed their homeland in "the single fatal night and day" spoken of by Plato in the "Timæus"?

this art was brought to these different tribes at the same time and by the same people, who might have been refugees from the cataclysm which overwhelmed the continent of Atlantis. Who else could have been those mysterious civilizing strangers of whom Montezuma spoke to Cortez, and of whom the Egyptian priest told Solon that they were a single germ escaped from destruction—a germ from which Athens, in turn, derived her culture? Perhaps the Etruscans were another such germ. Moreover, they had in ancient times a reputation for mystery and a sombre outlook on life, which made them the object of superstitious fear, and their country was, throughout classical times, the reputed home of devilry and witchcraft. They combined a high artistic development with a mysterious astronomical religion and a tendency to human sacrifice, traces of which may be found in the recorded practices of the Romans. The habit of throwing human victims into the Tiber is akin to the bloody Mexican sacrifices upon the teocallis of Tenochtitlan.

All this is mere speculation, but I confess that it possesses for me an immense attraction; and whether there be any truth in it or not, it is an undoubted fact that this section of Italy has always presented from time immemorial a striking combination of the extremes of artistic sensibility and of superstitious savagery, which may originate in the early contrast between these cultured refugees and the rude savages among whom they found themselves.

The sourness of temper or reserve, which may in ancient times have been taken for evidence of communion with the powers of evil, can never have been universal among the inhabitants of Central Italy. We have abundant proof that in historical times it has often been softened into dreaminess or quickened into gaiety. But the amenities of life were for centuries confined to the very few. In the famous epoch of Florentine culture the contrast between the civilized life of the City States and the abysmal squalor of the country-side was remarkable, even in a Europe which was witnessing the last decadence of the feudal system. In contemplation of the glories of Florence under the Medici, which have so justly

aroused the admiration of the historians of mediaeval Italy, the miseries of the rural districts, exposed for a thousand years to the periodic marches and counter-marches of ravening armies, from that of Alaric to that of the Constable of Bourbon, are lost sight of. Obscurity and misery were the only guarantees of life.

No doubt when the chief battle-ground of Europe, Rome herself having ceased to be a prize, was shifted to the North, the Tuscan peasant was less harassed, but the suffering of those awful centuries has left a lasting mark on his character. He sides invariably with the stronger faction. He endeavours, when uncertain which is the stronger, to be all things to all men. For example, the Italian political parties have a system of distributing cards (*tessere*) to their adherents. The Tuscan has a regular pack of them. If you ask him his political views he will look you up and down, and, seeing that you have smart clothes, he will probably say that he is a Fascista. You make a wry face, and he hastily corrects himself. It appears that he is really a Liberal. You raise your eyebrows, and glance at the neighbouring church, and he instantly baptizes himself anew as a Popular. You smile sarcastically, and he is at once transformed into a Republican. You whistle the national anthem, and he is a Nationalist; or the Red flag, and he writes " Evviva Lenin ! " with a fine disregard of the recent mercies of Providence, on the nearest bit of wall. If this does not please you he gives it up, and says what is true, namely, that he belongs to no party at all. It is not that he is spiritless, but he uses his wits to look after his own interests and is innately distrustful and suspicious. His sole interest in politics is whether they will influence the price of bread, the hours of labour, or the rate of wages. But no student of Italy can afford to neglect him, for in the mass and by instinct he is as much the conservative and steady element in the country as his French brother. His history has taught him to follow the line of least resistance and to profit to the utmost from the advantages of friendship with the stronger; that is all.

The phenomenon of the City States existing side by side

with rural barbarism is not hard to explain. Behind the partial protection of their walls, and in the semi-security afforded by their considerable population, the cities were able to preserve the great Roman municipal tradition, that status of independence which the curious may find engraved in the charter of Salpensa and Malaga. Alone in the desert of a social system, whose justice or injustice depended entirely upon the variable characters of powerful personages, they were oases in which were treasured some traces of obedience to an impersonal code. Too often they too fell into the power of local tyrants, and were merely large villages grouped round the feudal castle—Rimini under the Malatesta family, Milan under the Visconti, Mantua under the Gonzaga, or Ferrara under the Este, are cases in point. Too often the city laws were forgotten in the satisfaction of personal animosities or the delights of faction fights. But in spite of the utmost readiness to murder their fellow-citizens the inhabitants were intensely proud of their city, and even to-day an Italian will generally qualify himself with the name of his birthplace.

Ruskin has elaborated the theory that war is good for art, and that the continuous fighting among the petty Italian States, by working upon the imagination and by keeping men's minds continually on the rack, produced a super-excitement from which sprang the power to dream and to achieve the previously impossible. With all due respect to so great an authority, the theory must be dismissed as nonsensical. The creation and development of Italian mediaeval art was due to nothing less prosaic than the invention of banking and the succession to those strong enough to steal money of those intelligent enough to make it. The Christian had begun to dispute with the Jew that control of European finances which had for ages been a Hebrew monopoly. He was possibly slightly ashamed of his new-found riches ; he was certainly very limited in his choice of ways to spend them ; and so he became the ancestor of the modern collector. Unlike many of his descendants, he had taste and perspicacity, and the luck to live in an epoch when, for once, the

supply of new sources of knowledge was equal to the demand.

The rise of the new class of patrons, who hired artists instead of men-at-arms, synchronized by a happy accident with the opening up of the concealed literary and artistic treasures of Byzantium. Yet who can doubt that without the patrons the seeds of Greek culture thus reimported into the West would have fallen upon stony ground? Their growth did not depend upon mere association. For fifty years the Frankish barons were lords of Constantinople without appreciating or exporting an ounce of that beauty or of that learning which later quickened the indigenous talent of the West. It was thanks to the intelligence of the patrons that Cimabue was able to rescue Giotto and transform him from a shepherd boy scratching upon slabs of slate into the father of modern painting; that a great artist could spend his whole life in the casting of a single pair of bronze doors; and that a licentious lay brother found protection from the just reward of his sins in those who valued the genius rather than the character of the man. So far from the spirit of excitement, bred of ceaseless warfare, being responsible for these marvels, the citizens of the "fighting Dukedoms" generally confined their participation in these struggles to gossiping about them in the Piazze; and those who fought their battles were so excited about it that on one occasion two armies contended desperately for a whole day, and the only casualty was the loss of one unfortunate the weight of whose armour sank him inextricably in the mud of the battle-field.

Nor is there any evidence to prove that the greater than local struggles between France and the Empire, and between France and Spain, in which his State was one of the pawns, produced in the citizen any greater artistic frenzy than the previous European conflict between the spiritual and the temporal power. The masterpieces of Italian art were the direct consequence of the first breakdown of the monopoly of interest and consideration accorded to the military caste, the first recognition of qualities other than bravery and birth; and the period of their production remains a striking

example of what can be achieved by obscure talent in alliance with an intelligent plutocracy. For it is not only the great cities and the chief basilicas which have their artistic and architectural glories : nearly every little town, and not a few villages, have some exquisite monument raised to the glory of God or for the delight of man.

Of this curious patchwork of gold and darns which was the fabric of mediaeval Italy some traces remain. I have already mentioned the attachment of the modern Italian to his native town. In addition, there have survived an incredible number of minute universities whose foundation is insufficient for their support, and whose subvention costs the State a considerable annual sum. It is as though the individual colleges at Oxford and Cambridge were not concentrated in those towns, but scattered throughout provincial Britain. Many of these universities are of the most venerable antiquity, notably that of Padua, which was a famous seat of learning from the fourteenth century onwards.

Another relic of mediaeval times are the walls with which many of the lesser cities are still girt, and the shape of whose machicolations shows the original political colour of the place which they surround. A square top means that the sympathies of the inhabitants were Guelph, or pro-Emperor ; a round top shows that they were Ghibelline, or pro-Pope. Citadella is a gem-like example of the former. All without exception are adorned by the work of a local master, which is not some pretentious fountain erected by a Victorian mayor, but equal to the best in Italy. Such spots of beauty are the Piazza dei Signori at Vicenza, the church of the Chigi at Ariccia, the tower of Pisa, and countless others which every visitor to Italy must supply according to his taste and travels. But to me one of the most famous is unpleasing, possibly because whenever I go to Florence it is invariably pouring with rain. At any rate, the Piazza del Duomo in that city is like a grocer's shop. I like streaky bacon in the flesh, but in stone I cannot imagine its being made attractive even by the Italian sun.

Central Italy is still a country distinct and self-contained

not only geographically but linguistically. The Tuscan dialect is slower and broader, with a blur in it almost amounting to a stammer, and easily distinguishable even to a foreigner, from the liquid music of the Roman. A stranger who speaks Italian reasonably well will often be taken for a Tuscan. This peculiarity is so marked that it seriously lessens the chances of a Tuscan criminal escaping from justice. The fact, for example, that the person, who took away from its garage the car in which Signor Matteotti was murdered spoke with a Tuscan accent was one of the chief reasons for the arrest of the alleged chief of the gang who did the deed.

But in other respects Central Italy is gradually losing the mediaeval aspect of her towns and the primitive savagery of her country-side. The ardent panter after antiquities who has puffed his way up to an interesting-looking castle on the crest of some Apennine foothill will as likely as not find himself at a primary school, and having forced the portcullis, will interrupt an infant class which is studying, not a Mantuan tapestry of the sixteenth century, but a highly coloured anatomical chart of 1924. Ranged beneath the colonnades which surround the mediaeval squares of a provincial city he will find shops with modern plate-glass windows selling English cloth and German cutlery. Still, in city and castle the framework remains, even if the contents have changed; and it is on the sea-board that the greatest transformation is taking place. All along the Tuscan coast from Civita Vecchia to Spezia a long line of villas and seaside spas minister to the modern demand for fresh air and amusement. It is an attractive coast, fronting a lovely though treacherous sea, which once claimed Shelley as its victim, and backed by a line of frowning mountains rising gauntly out of the strip of plain. The Italian has discovered that the French is not the only Riviera, and, though a Spartan law has suppressed the casinos in Italy, there are few more pleasant spots for sun and rest than these new refuges for the jaded, where the national costume is pyjamas and the national custom of fleecing the stranger has not yet penetrated to an alarming extent.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUTH

IN a recent speech outlining a domestic policy Signor Mussolini admitted that many parts of Southern Italy were fifty years behind the times. He might have added a nought to this figure and still have been well within the mark. Brigandage is still a not unknown phenomenon in Sicily, and the dagger is not a neglected political argument. There is a proverb, "Guardati da Mattutin a Parigi, e da Vespri Siciliani," a reference to the massacre of St. Bartholomew in the former, and to the organized holocaust of the Angevins in Sicily—the latter an incident which Europe never forgot and which gave rise to one of the most celebrated diplomatic retorts in history.[1] In many districts of the South, life has remained much the same as in the tenth century, that period of dread when mankind confidently and fearfully awaited the end of the world, which was thought to be fixed by Holy Writ for the year 1,000.

No attempt, so far as I know, has ever been made to reconstruct a picture of Europe on the evening of December 31, 999, when millions of people must have gone to bed in the expectation that they would never wake. And yet what a scene it must have been! Terrified crowds cramming every church in Christendom, and sending up the moan of their frantic petitions; holding out despairing hands towards the dark figure of the priest silhouetted against the tiny light of the lamp burning on the altar, and catching their breath as the great bell tolled out the first stroke of midnight. And when nothing happened it was certainly regarded only as a respite, for in that year many did not trouble to sow crops

[1] That of the Spanish Ambassador to Henri IV. When preparing to attack the Spanish dominions in Lombardy the King, in a typical gasconade, remarked, "If the fancy seized me to leave home one morning I would lunch in Milan and dine in Naples." "Your Majesty might reach Sicily in time for Vespers," replied the Ambassador.

which they thought they would never harvest, and there was a grievous famine which brought indeed death to many, though not the death they expected. "What a spectacle of childish superstition!" exclaims the twentieth century reader. "What a picture of the terrible simplicity of the human mind!" Yet such simplicity exists in thousands of such minds in Southern Italy to-day, and every week produces some amazing anachronism.

The Dark Ages in general, and the tenth century in particular, are properly regarded as the epoch when the morose and sombre side of the human character had the freest play, and when a Christian world produced beliefs and ceremonies as blood-curdling as, and somewhat akin to, the mysteries of the devil-worshippers of the African forest. It was the period when Satan himself walked the earth in the guise of a black dog; or, in the more human shape of the Blackamoor, tempted the unwary to sell their souls for a mess of pottage. It was the period of possessions and exorcisms, of the struggle between a black and a white magic, whose professors had equal pretensions and similar methods. Indeed, it was the simple exaggeration of the processes and practices of white magic which produced the abuses against which the common sense and common honesty of such leaders of the Reformation as were not themselves playing for their own hand revolted in disgust. The belief in devilish possession, arising, no doubt, from the terrifying tricks which the human brain can play on its owner, and from the age-long tendency of man to transform the abstract conceptions of good and evil into anthropomorphic symbols, was persistent until the discovery of physical explanations of these phenomena. Nor are such beliefs confined to the Dark Ages, for there is no one who has not felt the existence of the inexplicable, and no one of any sensibility who has not experienced visions, awake or asleep, which cannot be accounted for by the workings of alcohol or the ingenious theories of Mr. Freud. The visionary, therefore, stands an equal chance of being hailed as a saint and of being excommunicated as a son of Belial. Some of the most famous saints have escaped hell by a hair's breadth.

France might be an English province to-day if Jeanne Darc had shown a natural tendency to retire, when Messire Jean Fournier, prompted thereto by Robert de Baudricourt, shouted at her without warning, "If thou be a thing of evil, avaunt! If thou be a thing of good, draw nigh!" In our own day the habit, peculiar to Scottish divines, of addressing the Lord as a good and the devil as a bad neighbour still forms the subject of that raillery which is the sole revenge of the Sassenach for his exploitation.

Nowhere, perhaps, does this belief in the efficacy of black and white magic survive more persistently than in Southern Italy. There are many possessors of the evil eye, and many localities which no one would dream of approaching after dusk so well known are they to be the haunts of the devil. Other charming practices have also descended from the readiness of mediaeval man to enlist on his side the powers of Light or of Darkness. A woman near Naples only two years ago contracted a bitter quarrel with a neighbour. After the approved recipe, she secured a ram's head, into which she hammered a number of nails, with a suitable incantation. She believed that her enemy would suffer in the flesh tortures similar to those produced by the driving of nails into the head. She was arrested by picturesque carabinieri, and the ram's head solemnly impounded. The whole story is reminiscent of the accredited practice of making little clay figures representing an enemy and throwing them on the fire, or otherwise torturing them, which was seriously believed to cause the person represented to die in unimaginable suffering. The reader may remember similar instances of vicarious murder reported by Mr. Kipling as having occurred in India.

On the score of miracles Southern Italy may claim to be pre-eminent. One in particular is most interesting, namely, the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. In the Church of the Duomo there is kept a small phial, containing a brown dust, which at certain seasons, in response to the public prayers of priests and people, ferments and

liquefies for a few moments before returning to its normal condition. Many and varied have been the tests to which this miracle has been subjected, but none has succeeded in giving a natural explanation of it, nor in proving it to be a fake. The last experiment was to weigh the phial before and after liquefaction. It was asserted to have become slightly heavier. But it is obviously doubtful whether this is invariably the result, for, if so, the phial should now weigh several tons, and it does not.

This is but one of the many mysteries, real or false, which have been invented for the subjection of man to a religious system and for securing his obedience to some authority other than his own will. I have always felt that the proneness of the Southern Italian to superstition is due to his living in a country where the workings of uncontrolled natural forces are so much in evidence. It is a land of fire and earthquakes. Vesuvius, Etna, and Stromboli smoke and rumble a continuous reminder of the uncertainty of human life and the impotence of human endeavour ; and the excavator who removes the last spadeful of ashes from Pompeii will feel the possibility that on the morrow the labour of a hundred years will be reburied by a new flood of boiling mud and a new hail of fiery cinders.

Backward though this people may be in the refinements of modern civilization, they yield to none in pride of descent. Mommsen believed the Iapygians of Apulia and Calabria to be, if not autochthonous, at least the earliest immigrants into Italy. There have been found in Calabria inscriptions in the unknown tongue which was spoken by these people. The Etruscan, whose language is also distinct and unintelligible, had certainly large settlements in Campania. These two forgotten races were merged in the general division into Latins and Greeks very early in history, though there were Etruscan-speaking settlements in the South until their destruction towards the close of the fifth century B.C.

Another very ancient race, the Albanians, have to-day their communities in Southern Italy which speak the Albanian

language. These communities are not actually of very ancient foundation, but they are in the historical tradition of the close connexion between the two coasts of the Adriatic, of which the best known evidence is the adventure of King Pyrrhus of Epirus. This person, who formed the ambitious project of carving out in the West a semi-Greek Empire similar to that conquered by Alexander of Macedon in the East, was purely and simply an Albanian; and the province which is, or was until recently, the object of modern Italy's dearest ambition, produced in the third century B.C. an "Eagle," who very nearly made Italy its vassal. Other fierce conquerors have left traces more or less permanent in the South. The Saracens, who avenged on Italy the destruction of Semitic Carthage, have left the western coasts dotted with their castles, and their terrible name still lingers in the memory of the sea-board peasantry. The Normans, some centuries later, came to Sicily, and founded a kingdom something more than transitory. Their heavy hand was felt by the victims of their marauding expeditions far up the mainland. But these two stranger races were essentially corsairs, and it is their forerunners who have really left their mark on the country and who may be considered as the ancestors of its people.

Of these forerunners the first were the Phœnicians, whose civilization afforded the first example in the world of a true plutocracy. They did not colonize to any great extent, but merely established trading stations regularly visited by their fleet. Their object was not conquest, and it was their interest, indeed, to preserve the independence of their customers. Thus even their greatest settlements, such as Carthage herself, for many centuries paid ground-rent to the native owners of the land on which they were built, and even their home-cities of Tyre and Sidon punctually and readily paid tribute to the Persian king. They were often in possession of the whole of Sicily except Syracuse, but at such moments they were really only the landlords of the Greek communities. They fought readily enough against anybody who interfered with their commerce, and dared the

most savage lands in order to extend it; indeed, their motto might well have been, "The Flag follows Trade." Their influence upon Italy was not perhaps very profound, for they had few trading stations on the mainland, and none at all, except in the extreme South, unless the coastal village of Punicum, near Caere, be one such. Although, therefore, the genius and tragedy of the Barcan family has interwoven the name of Carthage so closely into the fabric of Roman history, and cast a glamour over the Libyan city which her inhabitants as a rule were far from deserving, yet for the purposes of this work they could be passed over in silence were it not for two facts: the first, that conflict and contact with them turned the Southern Italian into the adventurous sailor he still is; and the second that it may be from the Phœnicians that he first learned his exasperating habits of robbery and mendicancy.

Of course there were sailors in Southern Italy before the Phœnicians, but they were Greeks who successfully vied with the former for the control of the western Mediterranean because of their readiness not merely to go to out-of-the-way places, but to stay there. There is hardly a coastal town from Syracuse to Naples which has not a Greek name, though it is a curious fact that the Greeks never settled on the Adriatic coast. But it is not surprising that the type, the character, and even, in districts, the language of the inhabitants are still predominantly Greek, when it is considered that the whole land from Naples South was known as "Magna Græcia" (Greater Greece), that one city—Syracuse—was strong enough to defeat the Attic State at the height of its power; and that the prosperity of the Greek settlements was such that one of secondary rank—Sybaris—has given us a word signifying the climax of luxurious refinement. The terrible punishment meted out by Rome to these cities for having joined Hannibal during the second Punic War only latinized them on the surface, and no vicissitude since has been able to change their essentially Greek character.

The Southerner, and particularly the Neapolitan, is one

thing to his countrymen and another to the stranger. Among his kin, he is a light-hearted, irascible, noisy, and tuneful person, sharing to the full the virtues of the general run of Italians and cursed only with an incurable laziness, for, in his climate, he needs very little to eat or wear. The only energy he displays is in devising means to obtain this little without actually working; and therefore to foreigners he shows his very worst side.

Naples is a city which should disgust the visitor with human nature. To him the entire population seems composed of horribly obsequious beggars, and revoltingly impudent touts. If he wishes to make an excursion, he may agree ten times with his guide or driver as to the charge, but at the end there will always be a demand for more. A favourite trick on the part of these gentry is to include in the programme something not previously contracted for. When the time for payment comes this is trotted out as having been the *pièce de résistance* of the day. The honest visitor recognizes that the contract has been exceeded, though he was probably given the impression at the time that the addition was gratis, and felt warmly grateful for the kind thought which prompted it. He may save his gratitude, for the whole thing was deliberately planned from the first. Being a conscientious soul, he recognizes his liability, and asks, "How much?" Then comes the clever and exasperating part of the business. The guide sizes up his client, and if the latter be a German or a Frenchman he generally names a fixed sum, and accepts the half without further expostulation. But if the client be British or American he says, with the gesture of one gentleman dealing with another, that he leaves it to the *Signore*, and the wretched *Signore*, thus attacked on his most exposed side, feels in honour bound to overpay him grossly. The best plan is to quote some sententious proverb about kindness being its own reward, and retire quickly into the hotel. Another favourite trick of the genus guide is to ask the client at intervals during the day whether he is satisfied. If he is incautious enough to answer "Yes," it is used in evidence against him at settling time.

Sometimes these transactions have their amusing side. A near relative of mine, having spent a particularly irritating morning with the street touts and beggars, hired, after prolonged haggling, a carriage to drive him out to Puteoli. As the vehicle moved off an excited individual leapt upon the step, and commenced to project a blast of garlicky Italian into my relative's face. The latter, convinced that he was the object of an attack either by a robber, or by another beggar, raised his umbrella and felled the new-comer to the ground. The carriage drove imperturbably on, but the driver's back gave evidence of intense amusement. My relative asked him what the joke was. He pointed with his whip to the dishevelled and gesticulating figure of the ejected and now distant assailant, and replied with a chuckle, "Il padrone." It was the owner of the carriage, who, as usual, had wanted to have his say in the settlement of the price.

The irascibility of the Neapolitan is beyond belief, whence comes the saying, "Napolitano largo di bocca, stretto di mano" ("The Neapolitan is wide-mouthed and narrow-handed"). But his anger is often assumed, and increases in proportion as he is in the wrong. There is a famous Neapolitan nobleman, well-known in Roman society, with the figure of an elephant, and the voice of a bull. To spend an hour watching him playing bridge is a liberal education in the actor's art. As he deals the cards he hums softly to himself the air of a little song, interspersing the bars with sniggering chuckles, probably because the words of the song are unprintable. As the last card falls on his pile, the last note of the air is emitted with a roar, and next instant his declaration is made with a scream, which may be either of joy or rage. If he plays the hand, it is to the running accompaniment of shrieks of mirth when a finesse succeeds, or rumbling oaths and calls upon the personages of heaven when it fails. If he is dummy, he entertains in loud and insulting conversation his partner, his opponents, or some person in the next room. Should he himself make a mistake, attack is at once recognized to be the best means of defence, and noise covers a

multitude of sins, so that the whole room is filled with bellowings as of a bull ape, interspersed with the yelps of his offended partner. But there is always a twinkle in his eye, and in a few moments there arises again the comparative calm of the song.

I well remember, also, a scene which I once witnessed in the Naples Customs House A gentleman was caught *in flagrante delicto* carrying a huge consignment of contraband which he had declared as old clothes. Upon the discovery by an unduly curious official, a scream of rage rent the air. It was an infamous plot upon the part of a personal enemy. The official, without taking the slightest notice, presented his little bill. At once the said official was identified with the said personal enemy, and a possibly accurate description of his character and antecedents presented gratis. He forgot himself in the man, and a counter-jet of imprecations impinged upon the culprit. The distance between the two faces bent over the counter was five-eighths of an inch, and there was murder in both pairs of eyes. A patient Englishman was standing near, waiting for his baggage to be examined, and obviously not understanding one word of Italian. Suddenly, having become speechless with rage, both protagonists turned towards him, as towards an arbitrator, and four hands and two mouths began to state to him the case, or rather cases. The dumbfounded Englishman, wilting before the blast, could only gasp in his native tongue, " My dear fellow, I haven't the remotest idea of what you are saying." The spectacle of such crass idiocy on the part of a foreigner was enough. The two Italians turned to each other with a gesture expressive of " Thank-God-whatever-our-faults-we-are-not-so-stupid-as-this-fool," their arms went about each other's necks, and the emotional reconciliation was complete. I noticed, however, that the culprit, amid his tears of joy, was careful to repack his contraband and that the official, blinded by those same tears, marked his bag through without more ado.

Much has been said about the Neapolitan music, and indeed a people so fond of noise could not fail occasionally

to make that noise tuneful.[1] They have, in addition, a real sense of the beautiful and dramatic, as, living on that coast, they must necessarily have. The greater part of the canzonette are workers' songs. "Santa Lucia," for example, is the song of a man rowing a boat lazily over the blue surface of the gulf; and so is "Addio, mia bella Napoli." "Funiculi, Funicula," is that of a man striking with a pick. The best of all is "Cara Sposina," a marching song, originating in the war, which has wonderful verve and pathos, and is most excellently rendered by a little Neapolitan in the Ulpia Restaurant at Rome. The Neapolitans also still produce an occasional musical genius, such as Caruso. But there is a surprising lack of new songs, and the people seem quite content with the ancient repertory of five or six ballads; and I do not think that even these are nearly so good as the similar songs of the Dalmatian peasantry, with their wail and heart-stirring beat.

Another war song, which is reported to have been invented by a Neapolitan brigade, has an excellent swing and the rude humour of soldiers, degenerating, it is true, in the later of its many verses to a certain vulgarity. The first two are perhaps worth transcribing:

Il General' Cadorna mangia buoni bifstecchi
Boom, Boom, Boom, bomba di canon'
I poveri soldati mangiano castagni secchi
Boom Boom, Boom, bomba di canon[2].

This is the complaint, as old as the existence of armies, by

[1] The comparison of the popular songs of all the peoples of the Mediterranean basin is most suggestive. I have heard the same refrains, marked by the same cadence and intervals, from a washerwoman at the fords of the Ebro, a wandering minstrel in Sheshuan in the heart of Spanish Morocco, a Dalmatian fisherman, and a Neapolitan ragamuffin. That the Spanish songs are derived from the Moors is well known; but what is not generally appreciated is the presence of large Slav contingents in the Moorish armies—that of Abderahman, defeated by Charles Martel in 732 for example—and I suggest that the Dalmatian Slavs may thus also have learned these melodies from the Moslems. As for the similarity of the Italian *canzone*, they also are probably derived from the same origins, given the close and unpleasant connexion of the Saracens with Italy, until the destruction of the pirate fleet by the British in 1812.

[2] General Cadorna guzzles good beefsteaks; but his poor soldiers have to munch dry chestnuts.

the front-line soldiers against the luxury of the staff. Never having belonged to the latter, I heartily approve, and have often emitted the same sentiments, which are rendered innocuous by the fact that, in this case, as in most, they are founded upon known falsehoods. The song continues:—

Il General' Cadorna ha scritto alla Regina
Boom, Boom, Boom, etc.
Se vuole Lei Trieste, comprate cartolina,
Boom, Boom, Boom, etc.[1]

This is not the defeatism which led up to Caporetto, for it is not serious enough. It is just the half-humorous, half-sad depreciation by the soldier of his own efforts which produced on our own army such as gem as

I want to go home, I want to go home.
Take me away far over the sea
Where the Allemans can't get at me,
Oh my, I don't want to die,
I want to go home.

There is a work to be written on the soldier songs of the Great War, but this would be a digression even more infamous than that of which I have already been guilty.

The Southerner has often been accused of instability, if not cowardice. This is most unjust. He has nearly always been made to fight in a cause of which he knew nothing and cared less. But on proper occasions, when his heart has been in the job, he has fought as bravely as any. In the Great War, though the Southern soldiers were repeatedly told by the defeatists that they were fighting in a struggle which was not theirs, the propaganda fell upon deaf ears. The Southerner has indeed, in the political sense, a considerable fund of tenacity and loyalty. It is in the South that Fascismo has made least headway, partly because of the impossibility of political propaganda among a population sixty-five per cent of whom are illiterates, but also because of the attachment of the people to individual chiefs such as Orlando, Amendola, or Di Cesaro, who belong to various shades of

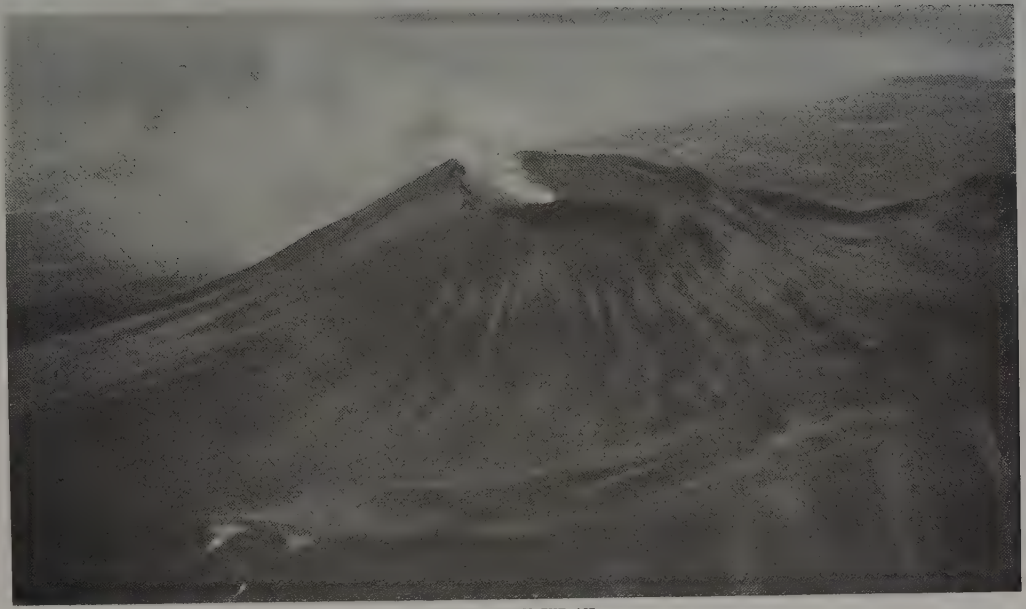
[1] General Cadorna has written to the Queen, "If you want Trieste, buy a picture post-card of it."

Liberalism—the first favourable,[1] the last two hostile to the Fascista Government.

This may be a proof of backwardness, but more probably the reluctance to change is just another example of laziness. That the Southern can be a fiery enough politician I do not deny, for if he were not he would belie his Greek origin. But in such a country who could care long or desperately for anything? Who could not share the "pathetic contentment" of the Neapolitan, when from the summit of Vesuvius, whither he has climbed on a skeleton pony, dragging a small boy at its tail, and galvanized into the effort by the sharp, barking "Ava" of the guide, he looks out over the mighty bay? Below, the green sea of the vines, split by the sombre streams of lava from past eruptions, runs down to a greener mound which is Pompeii, breaks against the white villages of Torre Annunziata, Torre del Greco, and Castellamare, and merges into the blue of the sea proper. To the right the mass of Naples crowns with brilliant white the darker blot of the docks and shipping. Far out on the bay the coasting steamer puffs its way over to Sorrento, crossing the path of a mighty transatlantic liner or one of the lesser giants of the Dutch line from Amsterdam to the East. To the left, tall purple mountains run down to the jagged teeth of the Sorrento peninsula, whose greyness is relieved by the huge green splash of the Valley of the Oranges. And out beyond its point is the shadow of Capri, rising into a sharp bluff at its nearest point, sinking in the middle to the white patch of the village, and rising again to the height of Anacapri, the whole giving the impression of the sinister immobility of a lion which has haunched his haunches to spring but has not yet lowered his head. There on that rock was the stronghold of Etruscan corsairs, the outpost of Greek civilization, and the home of the strangest and saddest of imperial characters, the Emperor Tiberius, who has had to wait for a modern historian to redeem him from the misunderstanding and malice of his contemporaries. Behind the gazer yawns the horrible mouth

[1] Since this was written, Signor Orlando has gone into a qualified opposition.

of the new crater, with its floor of evil lava scored and seamed with cracks, like the hide of an immense black crocodile, and its walls splashed with the bright yellow of sulphur. In the gathering dusk coils of fire squirm and writhe among the smoke of the active cone, and a hot blast of nauseating air stirs the ashes of the summit. The monster vomits forth a mass of rock and pearl-white smoke, shot with yellow, and settles down hissing once more to the ceaseless labour of preparing another mouthful. He is the only thing in the whole of that country-side which really works.



VESUVIUS FROM THE AIR

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

ROMA, CAPUT MUNDI

THERE is a fourth Italy, the most famous and the best known of all, the Eternal and Imperial City of Rome, whose soldiers were once the living hedge which sheltered civilization, and whose statesmen have so profoundly influenced the political and juridical systems of all States down to our own day that there is hardly a name of an institution or of a civil officer which does not derive directly from a Roman prototype. She has endured many vicissitudes. She has passed from the capital of the world, with a population of a million and a half, to a wretched village of a few thousand souls huddled among mighty ruins; and from that back again to the sleepy splendour of the Papal City; and so finally to the respectable township of six hundred thousand inhabitants which she is to-day. But through all these changes she has remained the heart of the West—through all, that is to say, up to the last. For it is not the least curious effect of her emergence as the capital of Italy that she has lost her international status. History has reversed itself, and instead of Rome conquering Italy it is Italy which has conquered Rome; and the ghosts of countless Samnites, Volscians, Marsians, and Gauls must have palely cheered the army of Victor Emmanuel II as it marched through the Porta Pia.

Yet Rome will never lose the love of millions who have never seen her. The very roll of her name is instinct with majesty, and when pronounced in any company should produce the effect of the beauty of Helen upon the Argive Elders—the silence of men before something almost superhuman. There is much in her history and character which

arouses antagonism. Personally, I confess that when I read the story of the Roman wars I have always a sneaking longing for the triumph of her enemies. Her victory is so often the victory of mediocrity in the mass over genius in the individual; and the gallant figures of her chief opponents—Hannibal the Carthaginian, Philip of Macedon, Mithradates of Pontus, Viriathus of Spain, Vercingetorix of Gaul, Cassivelaunus and Caractacus of Britain—seem scurvily treated by Fate when they go down before a nation whose only virtue is a fierce love of that independence which it denies to others, coupled with an infinite capacity for organization, so practical as to be extremely dull. The great achievement of the Romans was that they drenched their foreign subjects in the belief that they were citizens of a world State, and so induced them to use their talents in the service of Rome. The preservation and the destruction of the empire were alike the work of foreigners calling themselves Romans, but not, in fact, even Italians. The tenacity with which the citizens of Rome to-day adhere to Roman names for their officers and institutions, appeal to the sanctions of Roman traditions for their acts and ambitions, and convince themselves that they are the descendants of the Imperial Romans, justifies Mr. Belloc in his belief that Alaric, who sacked Rome, would have been horrified at the idea of destroying the Roman State. Indeed, spiritually speaking, it was indestructible.

I have had occasion to refer in an earlier chapter to the foundation of Rome as an outpost against the Etruscan power. If we admit some germs of truth to exist in the legend of Romulus and Remus we can add that some of the original settlers were refugees flying from the volcanic eruptions of the Alban hills—those eruptions which have left behind them some of the richest land in Italy and the delightful crater lakes of Nemi and Albano. There must have been some special reason—most probably military—for the choice of a spot so unsuitable to a commercial or an agricultural settlement. Some have pretended that it was in the centre of the Forum that the two great roads splitting Italy in the form of a cross had their junction, and that Rome was well situated,

therefore, for a market town. There is at least some probability in this idea, and for the suggestion that Rome was not merely the military outpost of one set of Italian tribes, but also the commercial meeting-place of all tribes in times of peace.

This view is strengthened by a number of facts, e.g. her early predominance among the cities of the Latin League, and more especially the character of the three original tribes, of which one, at least, was Sabine, and may even, as Mommsen says, have compelled the Roman Latins to accept their participation in the settlement. The habit of the ancient Romans to call themselves both Romani and Quirites was not, as the schoolboy may think, a deliberate plot to puzzle posterity. The latter was the title of greater honour, and perhaps the more prosaic derivation from "quires" equals "a lance," and "ire," so that the title means "lance-bearer," and is applied to the noblest element in the State, the warrior freemen, may be correct. But I cling to the more attractive hypothesis which makes the Quirites this original Sabine community, settled on the Quirinal Hill, and deriving from the town of Curi, or Cures, the Sabine capital.

The legend is that Tatius, King of the Sabines, brought in a colony of his folk from Curi, and established them on the Quirinal after the peace which followed the war occasioned by the rape of the Sabine women. The word Sabinus itself is admittedly derived from σαύνιον, a spear or lance, and therefore even the meaning of "lance-bearer" attached to Quiritis, or Quirinus is not altogether in conflict with this more interesting theory, if we suppose that "Sabinus" and "Quiritis" mean the same thing in different dialects. Vergil certainly thought that the Quirites were a distinct tribe, for he concludes the roll of the Latin army which opposed the Trojan invaders with the words "priscique Quirites" ("and the Quirites of olden times" or "of ancient descent"). Horace speaks of the "Mobilium turba Quiritum" ("The crowd of fickle Quirites"), whereas "Vir Romanus" has the significance of a man of loyal good sense—a sort of ancient Ulsterman. The proudest title in the world, S.P.Q.R., is

generally taken to be "SENATUS POPULUSQUE ROMANUS," but it is at least strange that a separate initial letter should have been allotted to the conjunction "que," which is invariably in writing attached to the preceding word, and far more probably the letters stood for "SENATUS POPULUSQUE QUIRITIUM ROMANORUM." I have even heard it urged that they have a yet older significance, namely, "SABINO POPULO QUIS RESISTET" ("Who may resist the Sabine people?").

However this may be, the letters to-day mean the Senate and Roman people. They still appear upon all public buildings, vehicles, and notices, and are even displayed upon such anachronistic objects as the motor watering lorries. They are generally surmounted by an effigy of a wolf suckling the infants Romulus and Remus, and in cages on the left of the steps leading up to the Capitol is an odoriferous wolf and a number of despondent and moulting vultures. Such are the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace which still live on in Rome. The Senate and Roman people have persisted, though the former was once reduced to a single person—and that person a woman—and the latter in the time of Rienzi numbered only some forty thousand.

The aristocratic tradition has always been immensely strong in Rome, ever since the days when the great Patrician clans waged their long struggle with the Plebs. The houses of the Claudii, the Fabii, the Æmilii, and a host of others survive in the greatest monuments that have come down to us, and are succeeded by the famous families of the Middle Ages—the Colonna, the Orsini, the Barberini, etc., most of whom have representatives living at the present day. There is an immense superfluity of titles, partly because every member of a princely house is *ipso facto* a prince, partly because of the lavish grant of such honours by the Popes, and partly because anybody who looks in the least like a gentleman is invariably addressed as "Signor Conte" or "Signor Marchese," and many have invented titles almost in self-defence. So prevalent did this habit become that the Fascista Government recently issued a decree establishing severe penalties for those guilty of it. The genuine aris-

tocracy, however, consists of the so-called Noble families. The reader who is interested in these social distinctions will find a list of them in the publication known as "Higlif," or, as we should say, "High Life." These aristocrats are, with the exception of some black sheep, men of culture, refinement, and simplicity. Punctilio is carried to a high degree—for example, there is a terrible custom, to offend against which is the chief of social sins, that if one meets a stranger in the house of a mutual friend one must leave the proper number of cards upon him or her next day. If one does not do so it is assumed that one does not wish to meet the person concerned again. Every social gathering, therefore, to the new-comer is little better than a nerve-racking exercise in the art of amateur detection, for he has to discover without committing the *bêtise* of a direct question, the names and addresses of his fellow-guests.

Most of the old families still possess a palace in Rome as well as large country estates. Indeed, palaces are so common that it is the Roman habit to call anything larger than a hovel by this title. Originally the palace was the town stronghold of the noble in which he lived when his faction was supreme in the city, and the country estates each possessed one or more castles to which he retired when temporarily in the minority. The story of the Colonna and the Orsini is one long succession of these exoduses and entries, the Colonna coming into Rome when the emperor's party was on top, and the Orsini when the Pope's authority was in the ascendant. The great families to-day do not pretend to any important political activity, and their feuds are a thing of the past. It is just two hundred years since there was a Roman Pope, for example, and over a hundred since there was a Pope of noble family. Even the great division between those who support the Italian State and those who cling to the Papacy has largely, though not entirely, disappeared.

Aristocratic influence does not, therefore, extend very far, and even under the Fascista regime, though most of the young nobles ardently support the Government, this is largely because of their sufferings from the imbecile land

agitation organized by the parties which Fascismo has supplanted, and the known leaders of Fascismo make no claim to be an aristocracy of birth. None of the really old families are very rich, though there are some extremely wealthy clans among the later comers who have made their money out of banking, and there has been some intermarrying with the plutocracy, both home grown and foreign.

The reason for his conservative poverty is not that the Roman *principe* thinks the making of money to be beneath him, but that he has a vivid remembrance of the financial disasters of 1870–80, incurred during the speculative madness which swept, like a plague, over the capital, and in which many of his kind were involved. Moreover, he has usually very little liquid capital, for his resources are locked up in his estates. And in fair play to him it should be said that he is generally very unworldly, to judge by the amazing difficulties encountered by anyone who tries to deal with his bailiffs and agents. Nothing whatever can be achieved without the application of the usual methods of oiling the machinery of negotiation. The *principe* himself, however, is a cultured and charming gentleman, in the literal sense of the word. His knowledge of literature and the outside world is more than superficial, and he is a linguist of great fluency, but of terrible accent. This is particularly noticeable in French, wherein the metallic twang of the Italian transforms the most delicate of languages into a fearsome vehicle of expression. The similarity of French and Italian is naturally remarkable, but it must not be presumed upon too far. There is the classical instance of an Italian porter at one of the embassies who was very proud of his French, and who greeted a foreign inquirer for his master with the statement that "Oui, parfaitement, son Excellence était chez lui, car il venait de salir l'escalier." It should be explained that in Italian "salire" means "to mount," but in French "salir" means something quite different. I am reminded of the story told of a famous English statesman, who attended a Paris function in the uniform of an Elder Brother of Trinity House, and informed an inquiring Frenchman that he was "Un

frère ainé de la Trinité." "Ah, Monsieur," replied the latter politely, "nous n'avons pas cela en France."

It must not be thought from anything I have said that the Roman aristocracy are incapable of concerning themselves with practical affairs. There are some, of course, who do nothing but live a pleasant though not by any means over-luxurious life, but there are many others who show great capacity and energy. A type of the latter is Don Gelasio Caetani, now Ambassador in Washington, who in earlier days earned his living in America as an employee on a ranch; and the aristocracy generally showed a fine spirit during the war.

The bourgeoisie is a new creation in Italy, where up to a generation ago there was really no middle class. The want of such an element was severely felt during the years 1915–18, when Italy, like her allies, had to improvise officers on a large scale. Indeed, it was the lack of efficient officers and of good leadership among the lower grades which often prevented the Italians from securing the full advantages won by the fine courage of the army as a whole, and which caused them an appalling waste of men. I remember that the idea of one individual who relieved us on the Piave was to march his men in fours up the road from which the trenches branched off, and upon reaching them to give "Left and right turn." The men marched into the trenches, and when they were filled, then the relief was complete. There is, however, now a middle class emerging, thanks to the development of industry, the more complicated standard of living, and the more delicate shading of social distinctions produced by the war. It contains many charming persons and numbers of distinguished men of letters and of science. Such are Signor Ferrero, the historian; Senator Lanciani, the archæologist, sweetest and most kindly of men; or Signor De Stefani, the Minister of the Treasury, who does a giant's work in comparative silence. All these and countless others would do honour to any country of which they were citizens.

But there is also another and a lower stratum of the middle class which is offensive to the eye, the ear, and the nose, and

whose representatives are the young gallants who may be seen in swarms any day in the Corso. These gentry affect huge shocks of frizzed hair, like Struwel Peter in the nursery book, ridiculous side-whiskers, violent perfumes, and pseudo-smart clothes. They are as noisy and unmannerly as the taxicabs that hoot their indifferent way down the same crowded thoroughfare. They stand in jabbering groups, resolutely blocking the narrow pavements, and once in a seat in a tram or bus they would not move for their own mothers. It is impossible for a lady to walk down this street alone without suffering some attempt at molestation. But, after all, every nation has its cads, and it is unfair to feature those of Rome as typical of any class. I do not know where they go nor whence they come. They seem to have no homes, and it would be a public benefaction if someone could discover an island where they could be marooned like the dogs of Constantinople. No, they are mercifully not typical, for the shopkeeper class, though it has many objectionable habits, is of quite a different stamp. But these youths are a standing nuisance, and I cannot better sum them up than by quoting the remark made by a private in my regiment, who observed a group of them in Novara Station on the way through to the Piave in 1917. "Lor', Bill," he cried to a companion, "there goes another blank neither." "What d'yer mean. 'blank neither'?" asked the other. "Neither blank man nor blank boy," was the illuminating and wholly accurate response.

The Roman people had originally a very bad reputation among other nations, and even among other Italians. A delightful old French poem by Guy de Provence, which I cannot resist quoting, runs:

Des Romains n'est il pas merveille
S'il sont fax et malicieux.
La terre le doit, et li lieux.
Cil qui primes i assemblerent
La felonie i aportèrent.
Romulus son frère i ocist
Qui trop grand crualté i fist:
Et Julius Cesar i fu
Murtris ici, est bien séu,

Qui tot le mont avoit conquis :
Nus ne fu onques de son prix.
Et Neirons i ocist sa mère,
et puis Seint Pol, enprès Seint Pere ;
Et Seint Lorens i fu rostiz . . ." etc.[1]

This is as charming as it is libellous, for to-day the Roman people are the most sentimental and insouciant in the world. Their ordinary character is kind, gentle, and amiable ; but they can still be as dangerous as the Paris revolutionary mob. Eyewitnesses have described to me the human sea which howled for the blood of Crispi after the Adowah disaster ; and throughout their history the Romans have been easily roused, and when roused have had a taste for blood. But their frenzy is of short duration, and it is generally safe to assume that if an event does not produce a riot in the first few days the danger of a riot is over. Their attitude towards public happenings is notoriously apathetic and indifferent. One would say that having seen all that the world has to show in the way of splendour, all the variations of systems of government, and the whole catalogue of human experience, they are rather blasé. If they come to a political demonstration it is long odds that they will display the stolidity of a British rural audience—a stolidity which, nevertheless, conceals a by no means foolish appreciation of the situation —and leave it to the Press to lavish upon the occasion the usual wealth of enthusiastic adjectives. From this is derived the rather misleading saying, " Romaneschi non sono buoni, ne caldi, ne freschi," which means, " The Romans are not a good lot ; they blow neither hot nor cold." But any tale of suffering moves them profoundly, and Rome itself was not less affected by the brutal murder of a little girl, Bianca Carlieri, than by the assassination of Signor Matteotti, which occurred a few days later.

[1] " It is no wonder that the Romans are a false and malicious folk, for the ground and the spot compel it. The first men who gathered there brought with them foul crime. Romulus slew his brother there, an act really a bit thick. Julius Cæsar was murdered there, he who conquered the whole world. None ever was such a prize card as he. Nero killed his mother there, and, after her, St. Paul and St. Peter ; and St. Laurence was grilled there," etc.

They have a great fund of pithy sayings and expressions to fit every occasion, most of which are imbued with a touch of a cynical philosophy. Such an one is "Passata la festa, gabbato lo santo." ("When the feast is over, the Saint is neglected.") Or, as we should say:

> When the Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be.
> When the Devil was well, the devil a monk was he.

Another is the charming saying, "Partire è un po' morire." ("To part is to die a little.") But the commonest of all is the beautifully expressive phrase which they employ towards each other on all occasions of annoyance, such as when one cab grazes another, or the waiter overcharges for a drink. It is "Va mori' ammazzato." ("Go and die assassinated.") Oaths are more stereotyped, and have invariably an ecclesiastical tinge. The most common are "Sacramento," "Maria Virgine," "Christo benedetto," or the pagan "Per Baccho." The Roman is not, however, in the least foul-mouthed, and relieves his feelings by a number of ejaculations, in which are the most interesting nuances in the Italian language.

I have always maintained that it is possible to sustain indefinitely a conversation in Italian with the knowledge of two words only—"Magari" and "Insomma," for the Italian in general, and the Roman in particular, only needs the tiniest spur in order to become a conversational Minoru. "Magari" is thrown indiscriminately into talk like pepper into salad. It is quite untranslatable, meaning at various times "perhaps," or "yes, I think so," or "however," or "of course," according to context. "Insomma" is the real master-word, inserted by the speaker to show he has reached his summing up, or interjected by the respondent to denote agreement and comprehension. But if linguistic ambition is not yet satisfied there are other exquisitely expressive words. "Peccato" is used when an accident occurs which is the speaker's own fault, such as a flagrant revoke at bridge or the missing of an impossibly short putt. "Accidenti" disclaims personal responsibility, and implies bitter reproach

of the unkindness of Fate, as when a tyre bursts or dummy is chicane. "Ma" is a courteous expression of interest in some statement, and may denote surprise or cloak incomprehension, generally the latter, for surprise is usually manifested by "Sapristi!" The list is almost indefinitely elastic.

Rome is not to any great extent a manufacturing town, and in character, as in situation, her citizens are midway between the energetic North and the indolent South. But her *operaii*, or artisans, are already forty thousand, and it is by no means improbable that use may be made some day of the swift current of the Tiber to develop this side of her existence as a capital city. She can never be a modern town. The streets of the old quarter will always be gutters rather than thoroughfares, and traffic will always move at a snail's pace as long as there continue to be jammed therein vehicles of such varying size and speed as horse-cabs, motor buses, trams, and taxis. The only way to make Rome a modern capital would be to transport the whole outside the Porta Pia, where there is room for wide roads and modern buildings without the danger of ruining some priceless monument whenever a pick is used. There is at present a movement on foot to increase the so-called "monumental area" by excavating the whole of the imperial fora, and the Circus Maximus, and this may mark the beginning of the abandonment of old Rome to the tourist. It has, however, been talked about for forty years, and, as usual in Italy, it would be wiser to wait until the work is done before drawing conclusions from it. In the meanwhile the Roman artisan will continue to inhabit the slums which have grown like fungi on the top of the imperial ruins, and to minister, after the manner of his kind, to the Roman householder.

In my experience, as a member of the latter long-suffering class, I have come across every variety of the former, and have had many more or less amusing dealings with its representatives. The business of negotiation is portentous. You have first to catch your professor when he is at home—no easy task, for he is a very early riser, and is at work all day.

You explain to him your needs, and he establishes his strategic position at once by saying that the job will be (*a*) difficult, (*b*) highly technical, and (*c*) that he is the only man in Rome who can do it. If you are a novice you tell him to come along and start, and it is only when the bill comes in that you start yourself. If you are an initiate, you insist on a *preventivo*, or estimate. (I love this word, with its entirely accurate suggestion of the prevention of robbery.) A dirty stub of pencil is produced, and after a ferocious calculation, ostensibly of the cost, but really of how much it is safe to charge you, a figure is written on a scrap of paper and mysteriously shoved into your hand. You glance at it and give a short sarcastic laugh; and then the ritual of bargaining begins.

Most of these artisans work on their own account, but pay a percentage on every job to some recognized establishment in return for recommendation. A favourite trick is, therefore, to hold up the *padrone* as the ogre in the background who prevents any diminution of the price. But this is sheer *blague*, for the *padrone* has no say in the price whatever and can only claim his percentage. The bargaining ends by the artisan asking how much you are prepared to spend, and the proper sum to name is from one-half to two-thirds of his estimate. He will protest violently, of course, but he knows his business thoroughly and exactly how much the job will cost him, so that you can generally tell whether his indignation is real or feigned. The agreed price is finally settled in the neighbourhood of your figure, and you need not fear that you have ground the face of the poor, for it will give him a handsome profit. The haggling is not by any means over, for he is certain to ask you for an *anticipo*, i.e. something on account, either before he begins or when the job is half done, and, as in the case of the Neapolitan guide, he will always do some tiny extra thing which at the end he will insist upon as an excuse for demanding more than the original price. The only course then is to be frankly brutal. But the Roman workman has his excellent points. He is not only skilful but thoroughly conscientious, and he does not mind how long

hours he works. There are no trade union restrictions on output, nor, the believer in ca' canny will be interested to know, any unemployment. To see the Roman laying bricks or loading dirt through the full heat of a summer's day will make you break out into a gentle perspiration yourself and thank God you are not as other men.

There are two tradesmen in Rome of whom I am particularly fond. The first is my house-painter, a stocky, bright-eyed little man, with a face all wrinkles from his delightful habit of smiling at everybody and everything. I have no doubt that I have added considerably to the creases, though he treats me as a mentally deficient, rather than an amusing child. He wears a suit of working clothes adorned with the paint splashes of forty years. When he has a job to do in my house, I descend one morning to find a smell pervading the apartment, as if a dinosaur had died beneath the flooring. It proceeds from a mountain of paper packages and old tin cans, among which feature prominently the rich caskets of "Gold Flake," and which, I am told by my servant, constitute the "roba del pittore," the "painter's paraphernalia." I issue instructions that the said painter is to be summoned at once and to proceed with his noisome task. Word is brought back that he will come "suddenly," but the word is as elastic as the Spanish *mañana*, and the smell abides with me for a full week. During this time my puppy has investigated one of the packets and departed, sneezing, to roll a mass of red powder in the mud outside, where it is transformed into paint, and thence transferred by ill-timed affection to my clothes and furniture. But when the real culprit comes I cannot remain angry before his cheery smile, and almost welcome the fact that his breakfast has had a foundation of garlic. It is at least a change of smell.

My other friend is a plumber, and belongs, therefore, to a profession in which the Romans are traditionally expert. Alas, Lucifer is fallen, perhaps because it is more difficult to mend a lead pipe than to construct the Cloaca Maxima. I have remonstrated with him in vain, and pointed out that the Roman partiality for fountains should stop short at intro-

ducing a promising specimen into my bedroom. " Come parla bene Italiano," he remarks disarmingly, and enlarges the spouting-gap in the bath-pipe.

He is an aristocrat, and does everything in the grand manner, but the grandest thing about him is his name. He is Constantine, son of Constantine, and is even more widely travelled than his great namesake, for he has worked in Paris and Pittsburgh. He is also more fortunate, for he concerns himself with none of the Arian and Athanasian quarrels which tormented the emperor. He says his prayer as the Holy Father ordains, and on great occasions he goes to Santa Maria Maggiore to exclaim wonderingly to his neighbours at the back of the church upon the gorgeous robes of the officiating ecclesiastics. " They seem to me like flakes descended from the golden roof," he says, " Ours is a great religion, Signore." We do not quarrel about that. Our sole serious difference was when I asked him whether he was descended from some Byzantine Greek, who followed Belisarius or the eunuch Narses to Italy when Justinian reunited for a space the Eagles. At the word " Greek " he spat disgustedly and sulked for a whole hour.

Later I found out the extent of my incivility, for he is a Roman from Trastevere, the proudest slum in Europe, whose inhabitants claim freedom from the copious doses of foreign blood which have adulterated the Latinism of the rest of Rome. He would certainly look magnificent in a huge helmet with a crescent of horsehair, whose curve would be continued by the line of his nose. His torso is made for the cuirass, and his muscled legs would fit a pair of greaves as a banana fits its skin. As the prosaic facts are, he wears a singlet, possibly white when Rome was very young, and a pair of trousers, heavily patched, of about the same epoch.

I once asked him how he spent his day. He was engaged in knocking a hole in my bedroom floor, and waved his hand towards it, as who should say, " In such noble work as this." Pressed, he acknowledged that he rose early, and fortified nature with a glass of raw white wine and a hunch of bread. Only on rare occasions did he aspire to coffee. Indeed,

if the spirit moves you to rise also at early dawn, you may see him tumbling out of a stifling hovel into a street still littered with the debris of yesterday, and yawning his way to a *trattoria* still splashed with the lees of yesterday's, or, for that matter, the previous week's, wine. There he waxes fierce with a neighbour over the question of the day of the week on which the Signora Tomacelli does her washing, for it is good to wake oneself up with a little gesticulation and argument. Suddenly he remembers that he has promised to be at my house at eight o'clock with the new piping, and—the devil!—he must be off. Arriving an hour late, he tells me a story, which he knows I know to be pure fiction, but which gives infinite satisfaction to his artistic soul, of how he has been up all night tending a sick wife. The artistry consists in a wealth of detail, extending even to a verbatim report of their conversation. Then, to work! But on the stroke of noon he is off to a mountainous plate of macaroni and tomatoes, washed down by the slightly better wine which his labour has deserved. The long, oily strands of the *pasta* are reduced to manageable proportions by a dexterous waggle of the fork, and in an incredibly short time the plate is cleaned and the last drop of sauce mopped up with a piece of bread.

There follows half an hour's play with his children as a preliminary to a short siesta in an old wicker chair in the doorway. His wife sits on the stone steps at his feet, recounting the incidents of the morning's shopping, interrupting herself at intervals to shriek for confirmation, to a neighbour on the other side of the street, of some particular which the latter cannot possibly have overheard. It must be admitted that the good lady does not seek to rival her French cousin as a cleanly housewife, for most of the houses are thick inside and out with the dirt of ages, and if there is not a single flea it is because they are all married and with large families. But she is a good soul, and an adept at the *cucina Romana*, a quite distinctive school of cookery.

The most typical Roman dishes are perhaps spiced artichokes, called *carciofi alla Giudea*, probably because this

cheap but succulent dish was first invented by the Jews of the Roman Ghetto ; green peas fried with bits of ham (*piselli con prosciutto*) ; *gnocchi alla Romana*, little farinaceous cakes mixed with potatoes, cheese, and garlic ; and various preparations of grated fish mixed with rice or spaghetti—the thinner brother of macaroni. Another excellent dish is the *fritto misto*, oddments of fish fried together, among which may be found anything from a sardine to an octopus.[1] Many of the single Romans economize by taking out an all-in policy at a *trattoria*, in return for which they receive two good meals a day at a cost of twelve to fifteen lire. Both small and big are also very partial to the ice-cream, or the even better water ices of lemon or coffee with whipped cream, all of which are delicious, and sold from the little painted handcarts which the Londoner may see on a summer's day in Soho.

About 2 p.m. our hero returns to work and continues at it until seven. He then makes his way back to the *trattoria*, where he takes his evening meals, and for several hours he is one of the nightly thousands who, with the grime of work still on them, cluster round the rickety tables in the glare of the unshaded lights. Electricity is cheap in Rome, but it has its drawbacks. There are two main supply companies, and if the system of one is working it is quite certain that the other's is not. At the least spot of rain both fail entirely, and half the population of Rome spend the evening patiently sitting in the long line of motionless tramcars, or groping about with lighted candle ends. They take these things with extraordinary philosophy, and our hero if the light fails in one café moves on to the next, lighted by the rival system. There, from the mouth of the narrow street, you may see him and his comrades, black against the glare, an arm uplifted in gesticulation, feet curled round the chair rungs, body bent forward, and shoulders hunched. One by one the figures rise and pass into the shadows, until only the weary waiter is left to dab negligently with a cloth at the tables and a tribe of starveling cats takes possession of the tasty terrain.

[1] This is a sober fact. The tentacles of small octopi are very much prized as a delicacy. They are of the consistency of the gristle of a sirloin of beef and taste like india-rubber.

The relations between the various grades of Roman citizens are to-day entirely friendly, and the old aristocracy is generally held in the deepest respect, for the Roman has an unfailing eye for your true gentleman. I have the feeling that this friendliness always existed to a certain extent, because every Roman was proud of being a Roman, even when the internecine struggles were at their fiercest. There is a story of that Stefano Colonna who was driven out of Rome by Boniface VIII in 1295, that he was held up by robbers in the country who asked him his name. "Stefano Colonna, a citizen of Rome," he replied. The robbers let him go in peace. But it must be confessed that neither a common citizenship nor the terror of a great name always produced such an effect upon the people; for in the days when the great families ruled Rome, and the whole city was filled with their castles and the tramp of their men-at-arms, the feeling between the two orders was every whit as bitter as in the times of the Gracchi, and every now and then the nobles had to stop fighting each other in order to put down a popular rising. These struggles were always bloody. Sometimes they ended with a single execution, such as that of Stefano Porcari; sometimes, as during the struggles between Rienzi and the Colonna, there were pitched battles.

On the whole, it may be said that the people were against anybody who made them pay taxes, and the story of that same Rienzi shows that not even the sentimental appeal of the Republican ideal was strong enough to counterbalance the resentment against having to pay for a Republic in practice. And, after all, most of the time the people were too poor, too plague-stricken, too hopelessly inferior in armed strength effectively to resist their overlords. Gone were the days when the plebs could extort privileges from the Patricians. Gone were the times when the people, though they had lost their self-respect, were still numerous and formidable enough to extort bread and games from their imperial masters. Only one weapon remained to them—their tongues; and these launched a series of cutting, plaintive, and sometimes witty sarcasms against the great families

which survive the oblivion enshrouding most of what those families did. These popular lampoons derived great encouragement from the institution of Pasquino, the statue near the Piazza Navona, to whose base they were attached, and which performed the function of the modern Opposition Press. In an old print of this statue Pasquino appears with a long poem on his pedestal, of which two lines are :

Io son' quel famosissimo Pasquino
Che fa tremar' i Signori piu sovrani.[1]

His tongue was quite unbridled against all the powers that be, so much so that the worthy Dutchman, Pope Adrian VI, in his honest endeavours to reform the State, threatened to throw him into the Tiber or burn him. Therefore the votaries of Pasquino hated this Pope, and made their deity compose an epitaph beginning : "Qui jace Adrian sisto, homo divino,"[2] a gross libel on the temperate and harassed old man. But Pasquino was more justified in his attacks upon the nobles, and the wag who successfully perpetrated

Orsini, Colonna e Frangipani
Riscuotono oggi e pagano domani

or,

Piu assai che fame Galli e Aragonese
Savelli, Orsini, Cenci, e Colonnese [3]

must have felt that his sufferings were not unavenged. But all warfare alike of the tongue and of the sword between the orders is now at an end. Even the Socialists at the height of their agitation after the war attacked the aristocrat only in so far as the latter was a capitalist. The nobles have given up killing each other, and among the people lethal weapons are only resorted to for purposes of the *crime passionel*.

[1] "I am that most famous Pasquino, who makes the mightiest nobles shiver."

[2] "Here lies Adrian the Sixth, the man diwine." The joke is only perceptible in Sam Weller's dialect.

[3] "The Orsini, the Colonna and the Frangipani, owe to-day and will pay to-morrow." And, "Worse than hunger, Gauls, or Spaniards are the Savelli the Orsini, the Cenci, and the Colonna"—an allusion to the sufferings of Rome during the struggles between France and Spain for the hegemony of Europe.

Never since the very early days of the Republic have the Romans had their city to themselves, nor has the burgess roll ever been any sure guide to an estimate of the population. It can only be said that from the time of the great expansion during the last years of the third and the first half of the second century B.C. down to our own day the percentage of the total which represented the number of strangers must have been immense. These strangers were originally either brought there as captives of war or attracted thither by the commerce and amenities of the great city. The eager competition for the title of "Roman citizen," thanks to the social and economic advantages which it entailed, is notorious, and even the Apostle Paul did not disdain its judicial privileges.[1] To-day, also, Rome draws to herself annually a floating population of strangers, no longer perhaps for the same reasons, but rather because her life is so pleasant. This cosmopolitan society, very largely distinct from the native Roman society, which prefers to mix with the members of the diplomatic and other quasi-permanent bodies, differs in character from similar phenomena in other European capitals. It may be described as a tourist aristocracy, the general staff of the idle and intelligent poor. Sometimes one of its number becomes so saturated with the Roman atmosphere that he passes over to the ranks of the foreign colonies; but, generally speaking, it remains the ephemeral collection of birds of passage, incessantly renewed for a few months in the winter and spring of every year. It stays longer than the average tourist, and not so long as the colonist.

The effect of the Roman atmosphere is that one works very hard to avoid work, for the mental labour of devising means whereby one may prolong the pleasant hours of sitting in a chair and doing nothing whatever is not light. In most places complete idleness clashes with the restlessness of human nature, and produces a discontent, but not so in Rome.

[1] The appeal to the chief magistrate of the Roman world: "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go." Festus was not guilty of a cruel joke in using these words, but was performing his constitutional duty as a provincial magistrate—a duty also scrupulously performed by Pontius Pilate.

It is a land in " which it seems always afternoon," and that particularly pleasant part of the afternoon when a good lunch has engendered the somnolence of repletion. Possibly it is this characteristic which attracts the cosmopolitan, for otherwise there is little or nothing of the gay life which he insists upon having elsewhere. For music and the theatre Rome is not comparable to Milan. There are night clubs of a sort, but of a very inferior sort. There are no smart sporting functions, and the smart clothes are all imported from Paris. It is a remarkable fact that there are no *Grands Magasins* in Rome, the very largest being a modest block which Mr. Selfridge would swallow as an *apéritif*; for the Roman shopper has not grasped the distinction, if there is one, between the expensive smart and the cheap pseudo-smart, and, both in the masculine and the feminine, prefers the latter.

There is plenty of intrigue and a superfluity of scandal, but the cosmopolitan does not live by intrigue and scandal alone. And yet in Rome he or she is apparently perfectly content to go day after day to the same houses, see the same people, say the same things, play the same bridge or mah-jong, and repeat to Madame So-and-So what Madame Such-and-Such has said about her, and vice versa. I have recently found some explanation of this phenomenon in the confession made to me in an expansive moment by one of the cosmopolitans. He said that for forty years he had been an ardent collector of postage-stamps, but that pursuit having palled he had become a collector of titled ladies, for which purpose Rome was unrivalled. He did not, he hastened to add, mean anything disreputable: it was simply that he loved to bring together in one place the greatest possible number of Marchesas, Contessas, and Principessas. His mania betrayed itself in his conversation. It consisted in reeling off a string of these ladies' names, punctuated, after every one, by the questions " Do you know her? " and " Have you been to her house? " He was as happy if he discovered one whom you did not know as the philatelist who extorts from a confrère the confession that the latter does not possess a three-

cornered Cape of Good Hope, or a Post Office Mauritius. I have given him in my turn many moments of agony by asking whether he knew the Marchesa di Guarda Roba, or the Principessa di Ritirata. If ever his eye lights upon these lines he may live in peace, for these ladies were born on the Greek Kalends.

The foreign colonies are a more serious affair, for not only are they of great antiquity (not personally or individually, of course, but as foundations), but they also constitute a very characteristic feature of the life of the capital. There have always been a number of distinguished foreign residents in Rome, apart from the foreign ecclesiastical communities, among whom our own countrymen have not been the least. The lovely little house at the base of the great staircase leading from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinita dei Monti was for some time the home of Shelley, and his son is buried in the English cemetery, which lies close to the tomb of Cestius. This house is now the home of the Keats-Shelley Society and possesses a considerable library, including the the best collection of the relics of those two poets, and also of the friend of Shelley, Lord Byron. There are still a number of Englishmen who possess or preserve that deep affection for Italy and the Italians which was so common among the Liberal intelligensia during the Risorgimento, and who either live in Rome or come there as often as they can. Such are Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, the author of some delightful works on Garibaldian history, and Sir Rennel Rodd, British ex-ambassador in Rome, whose glorious eyebrows deserve a Homeric epithet—say, the " Beetler of Brows."

There is also a permanent British institution, recently founded in Rome, and housed in a deliciously simple and yet effective place in the Viale Giulia—the British School of Art. Here live some twenty students of painting and sculpture, who hold an annual exhibition of their work and imbibe a love of the classical which will, it may be hoped, some day inspire a number of persons with enough of the holy fire to attack and destroy the Albert Memorial. They are under the charge of that very remarkable archæologist, Dr. Ashby,

who uses a decided manner wherewith to expound his justifiably definite views, and also, I suspect, to conceal a profound natural shyness. His co-director is Mrs. Strong, from whom knowledge pours as from a fountain, and to whom I would express the thanks I feel for her kind helpfulness were it probable that she would agree with a single statement in this book. Let me therefore thank both these eminent authorities indirectly by saying that the British school is likely to have as great a history before it as the English college, which has had a start of the school by twelve hundred years, has behind it.[1]

The Venerable English College, to give it its due title, is concerned, of course, with entirely different objects. Tradition says it was founded about the year 726 by King Ina of the West Saxons, who, after a rule of thirty-seven years, abdicated the throne in order "to spend some time of his pilgrimage on earth in the neighbourhood of holy places, that he might be more easily received by the saints into Heaven." There can be at least no doubt that Ina did retire to Rome, and the chronicler Matthew Paris says that "it was ordered by a general decree of the Witan that throughout the Kingdom of the West Saxons to the blessed Peter and the Roman Church should be sent by every family every year one denarius in order that the English dwelling in Rome should have *vitale subsidium*—an aid to life." Some of this money in Saxon coins was dug up in the house of the Vestals in the Forum, and may now be found in the museum in the Baths of Diocletian. A picture of the Virgin given to the Church of Santa Maria in Sassia by King Ina is still hung in the Church of San Spirito in Sassia, which was built on the site of the former edifice. Sassia is, of course, simply "Saxony," or "the town of the Saxons," and the English were, in fact, the first to establish a quarter in Rome, which was, and is still, known as the Borgo, the Saxon word for town, which appears in so many endings of English place-

[1] It is now known that an attack of temporary, be it hoped, insanity has induced the committee of the school, which meets in London, to dispense with the services of Dr. Ashby and Mrs. Strong. This is keenly felt by all the archæological communities of every nation to be a severe blow to the prestige of British scholarship in Rome and a disaster for the school itself.

names to this day. The painting by Raphael in the Vatican, known as the "Incendio del Borgo," depicts, as a matter of fact, the destruction by fire of the quarter in the pontificate of Leo VI (847–55); and how considerable was the English colony of those days is proved by the fact that when a band of Saracen freebooters attacked Rome in 846 it was the English, together with some Franks, who sallied out to meet them. After recording such a display of spirit it is painful to have to add that the English were soundly beaten by the infidel, and not only their quarter but St. Peter's itself was sacked. It is due to the shame and loss inflicted by this raid that the Pope built a wall round the Vatican, whence this district came to be known as the Leonine City.

There is really nothing surprising in the fact or the size of this English colony. The relations between the Holy See and Saxon England were extraordinarily close. Caedwalla, King of the West Saxons, died in Rome in 689; Coinred, King of Mercia, and Offa's heir-apparent to the throne of the East Saxons, in 709. Offa, King of Mercia, was there in 793; Ethelwulf and his son, the afterwards famous Alfred, in 854; and it was Alfred who, by his favour with the Pope, secured certain exemptions from taxation for the Schola Anglorum. There are even strong grounds for believing that a number of Saxon refugees from the Danish invasion fled from the heathen to take shelter with the Vicar of Christ, thus fulfilling for themselves personally the old petition in the Litany, "From the fury of the Northmen, Good Lord, deliver us." Nor is it surprising that an Englishman having once reached Rome should wish to stay there; for the journey was appalling. An old chronicler says: "When we set out for Rome, we had to face weather *hieme suspectum*, the snow of the Alps, rivers in spate, the prisons of the Emperor, the unsettled conditions of the country, and the exactions of the palace. We had faith that we could avoid all these dangers safely by prayer, and, in truth, it was only the exactions that we could not moderate either by our prayers or by our poverty." By sea the journey was not much easier, for the traveller was transported with much the same irreverence by the British

sailors of those days as the Mussulman pilgrims are dumped across the Red Sea by the tramp steamers. There is a rather amusing poem on the subject, dating from the fifteenth century, in which the captain of the ship is made to exclaim :

Bestowe the boote, bote-swayne anon,
That our pylgryms may pley-theron.
For some ar lyke to cowgh and grone,
or hit be full mydnyght
Hale the bowe lyne ! Now, rere the shete !
Cooke, make redy anoon our mete !
Our pylgryms haue no lust to ete.
I pray God yeue them rest.

This, until something similar is found upon an Assyrian clay tablet, is the first recorded instance of the fat pork joke. In the fifteenth century the joke had its modern consummation, for later on we read :

Thys mene whyle the pylgryms ly
And haue their bowlys fast theym by,
And cry aftyr hote maluesy
" Thou helpe for to restore."

Others sought vainly more spiritual comfort. They

Layde theyr bowlys on theyr kne,
And rad so long they myght nat se ;
" Alas, myne hede wolle cleue on thre "
Thus sayth another certayne.[1]

It should also be remembered that the British Isles were the very outpost of Christianity, and it was no sarcasm which caused the Roman poet to call us " Toto divisos orbe Britannos " (" The Britons distant the whole world away "). Yet, in spite of these difficulties, communication was frequent, and it will not be out of place here to insert a curious proof of the devotion of the English Catholic and of the tricks which fate could play upon him.

A very beautiful MS. of the Vulgate in the Vatican bore upon its title page the name of the donor " PETRUS LANGO-

[1] The meaning of this poem is all too clear ; but perhaps one or two words are obscure. " Yeue," = " give " ; " hote maluesy " = " hot malmsey wine " ; and " cleue on thre " = " split " or " cleave into three."

BARDORUM," and on that account was long supposed to have originated with some pious Lombard priest. During the recent examination of these MSS. by the commission on the Vulgate, for the purpose of restoring the text of St. Jerome, it was observed that many of the letters in this name, as in the accompanying dedication, had been superimposed upon some older writing. Some of the hidden letters were deciphered sufficiently to lead to the belief that the MS. had an English origin, and inquiry discovered that the Venerable Bede speaks of a very fine MS. having been sent to Pope Gregory II in 715 by CEOLFRIDUS, abbot of the twin monastery of Wexham and Jarrow, who died as he was bearing his gift to Rome. There can be no doubt whatever that PETRUS LANGOBARDORUM should read CEOLFRIDUS ANGLORUM, and that, the abbot being dead, Messire Peter of Lombardy saw and seized an admirable opportunity to gain credit with the Holy Father at no cost to himself.

The Schola Anglorum suffered severely from the quarrels of the Norman monarchy with the Popes, and the numbers of English pilgrims upon which its prosperity depended so declined that it practically went bankrupt and was converted by Innocent III into an ordinary paupers' hospital under the charge of the Brethren of the Holy Ghost, whence the existing church derives its name. But after the failure of the Crusades the steps of the faithful, unshaken even by that epic of huge and crude disaster, tended to return to Rome, and in the year 1362, in order to protect their countrymen (so little have times changed) from the extortions of the Roman hotel-keepers, John the son of Peter, otherwise called John Shepherd, a paternostrarius or rosary seller, an Englishman living in Rome, made over to William Chandler of York a certain house, property, and garden for use as a hospice by English pilgrims, and this was converted into the English College in 1578. It was gutted and used as a barrack by the French revolutionary army in 1798, and remained empty for twenty years. In 1818 it was reoccupied, and has been in use ever since. The restored and renovated building stands in the Via Montserrato, and the present rector, Monsignor Hinsley,

has some sixty students under his charge. The college has recently acquired a magnificent summer retreat at Palazzola in the Alban Hills, between Castel Gandolfo and Rocca di Papa. If, as some think, Palazzola is the site of the ancient Alba Longa, the very first birthplace of the Roman State is now in the possession of the English.

I have dwelt at some length upon this English institution because it is naturally that of the greatest interest to the reader; but though we were the first to undertake such an enterprise, our example has been followed by nearly every Christian nation. At various times, there have been founded in the city of which, to paraphrase the remark of Montaigne, all Christians are princes, institutions for Spaniards, Germans, Hungarians, Abyssinians, Armenians, and Copts. Their students, in crocodile file promenading through the streets, clad in distinctive long gowns and broad brimmed beaver hats, are still a feature of the city, and I shall refer again to them later. The only institutions with which I propose to deal at any length in this chapter are those of the French, which are of remarkable antiquity and interest.

The very earliest foreign foundation other than English was that of the Franks, on the site of the building now occupied by the Inquisition. This was the hospice and cemetery for French, or Frankish, pilgrims founded by Charlemagne about the time when he came to Rome to consummate the resurrection of the Roman Empire of the West by receiving the Imperial Crown.[1] When the Holy Roman Empire became purely German, after, that is to say, the detachment of France and Spain from the Carlovingian dominions, the French proper early established themselves in Rome, and were a numerous community. That, at least, seems to be the meaning of the somewhat obscure proverb, "Il-y-a plus de Français à Rome que de chiens rouges."[2] Down to the restoration of Pius IX by Louis Napoleon, the French kings,

[1] I exclude the dedication of a chapel to St. Petronilla by Pepin the Short after his coronation by Pope Adrian II in 756, because it did not imply the foundation of a colony of French settlers. Pepin, however, was officially styled "Patrician of the Romans and Defender of Holy Peter."

[2] I should be grateful to any reader who can give a history of this saying.

as warranted by their title of " Très chrétienne," were looked upon as the champions of the Ghibelline party, and were capable, as during the Great Schism of 1309–77, of running Popes of their own. The French or Frank residents had moved from Charlemagne's hospice during the fourteenth century, and established themselves in a very modest dwelling in the Arenula region.

The end of the Great Schism and the reconciliation of the French Church with Rome was the beginning of a steady increase in their numbers ; and in 1478 they exchanged their Arenula property for four churches and the Hospital of St. James of the Lombards. Thus was formed the Church, Parish, and Confraternity of St. Louis of the French, which still exists, and is the richest foreign foundation in Rome. It has been enlarged from time to time by the faithful or the fearful ; by, for example, Archdeacon Jacques Bugnet of Chartres, who rebuilt the hospital and turned it into a hospice in 1480 ; and by Catherine de Medici, who, in 1584, presented to the Church of St. Louis of the French " Toutes les petites maisons, places, et boutiques, étant lès et environs de Nostre Palais de Rome, vulgairement appelé le Palais de Madame " (Palazzo Madama). This great institution since 1478 has provided the officiating clergy for the Church of S. Salvatore in Thermis, built upon that part of the site of the baths of Nero afterwards occupied by those of Alexander Severus. It also absorbed in 1582 the Church and Hospices of Saint Yves des Bretons, founded by that same Anne of Brittany who has left her arms, the famous twisted ropes, in conjunction with the salamander of François Ier, all over the Loire Châteaux.

There is one other French foundation which is of particular interest to the visitor, or would be if he realized how often he trod on its property. This property is the great staircase which leads from the Piazza di Spagna to the Trinita dei Monti, and belongs to the Dames Françaises du Sacré Cœur, whose church and convent stand at the top of the staircase. They were granted the property in 1028 when the original community, " des Minimes," for whom the buildings

had been erected by the aid and influence of that swollen-headed boaster Charles VIII of France at the prayer of St. Francis of Paula, died out. The staircase itself is due to the spell which Rome cast over a certain Étienne Gueffier of Mans. This good man was for thirty years (1630–60) Secretary and Charge d'Affaires of the French Embassy, and left the tremendous sum, for those days, of 24,000 Roman scudi (£7,500 of our money) for the construction of such a staircase—to the rage of his heir, the Sieur Chapuis, who appears to have contested the will, but was nevertheless forced to agree to the payment of a sum of 15,550 scudi, of which 10,000 were earmarked for the staircase. I believe that the ladies of the Sacred Heart have the right to close their property —a right now vicariously exercised by the thieves who sell flowers at the base of the steps. Yet they are right to tolerate these miscreants, for there is no sweeter experience in Rome than to emerge from the stifling sewer of the Via della Croce and see the mass of blossoms splashing a broad band of colour across the base of the picture formed by the stately sweep of the grey-white steps and the tall fingers of the dull red church at the summit.

The whole of this side of the Pincio is indeed in French hands. It is a kind of æsthetic Ruhr; for immediately to the north of the church and convent is the Villa Medicis, the seat of the French Academy, famous in the annals of French Art, the greatest ambition of whose devotees is to be a Prix de Rome. Its establishment was suggested to Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV, by one Errard, a painter and architect. The statutes of 1666 lay down that the Academy shall be composed of twelve young men of the French race, and the Catholic and Apostolic and Roman faith—"savoir, six peintres, quatre sculpteurs, et deux architects, sous la direction d'un peintre du Roy, qui sera establi Recteur de ladite Académie, auquel ils seront obligez [*sic*] d'obéir avec toutes sortes de soumissions et de respects." One of the acts of Napoleon on account of which Europe has forgotten his twenty years' disturbance of her peace, and France forgiven the wholesale slaughter of her sons, was his acquisition of this

inspiring villa and garden as the home of young French artists.

The Romans called the Pincio the "collis hortorum" ("the hill of the gardens"), and from the terrace of the Villa Medicis we can understand why the rich epicures of the Republic chose it for their dwelling-place, and even the self-tormented Emperor Domitian found peace in its lovely rusticity from the haunting ghosts. For there below lies the whole Imperial City, a mass of towers and cupolas, a tangle of the works of man, from the shapeless masonry of the Roman Forum to the too shapely marble of the Victor Emmanuel monument. And there, down by the Tiber, stands another gem, also in French occupation, the Palazzo Farnese, which, in my humble estimation, is far and away the finest of all the Roman palaces. The French Embassy is there, and also the recently instituted or revived French School, which though it dates only from 1870 is spiritually descended from Charlemagne's Schola Francorum.

No account of the foreign colonies would be complete without a reference to that of the Chosen People, whose characteristics remained the same from the time of their first coming to Rome up to a few years ago. Tacitus summed up the Roman Jew nineteen hundred years ago by saying that his kind "were scrupulously honest, and always generous one to another, but filled with ineradicable hatred against all other men." The Jews were first brought to Rome by Pompey the Great, who had doubtless collected numbers of them during his Eastern campaigns, and particularly his expedition into Judæa. As prisoners of war, they were originally slaves, but by the time, a few years later, that Julius Cæsar began to come into prominence they were already free, and pursuing their traditional trade of moneylending. They lent Cæsar colossal sums during the period of his early extravagances, having apparently the *flair* to divine beneath his foppish exterior the qualities which made him later master of the Roman world. The gamble came off, and he repaid them every penny of capital and interest. This unusual honesty in a Gentile seems to have inspired them with a great

affection for the Dictator, for, after his murder, they mourned him for a whole week, and it is not improbable that they could have told who provided the funds for the armies of his avengers.

The Julian Emperors treated them kindly, and Augustus formed them into a kind of colony on the north side of the Tiber, near the island. A further contingent of Jewish slaves was brought to Rome by Titus after the capture of Jerusalem, and the story that the Colosseum was built by their labour has at least the merit of probability. The Jews were not unpopular, nor treated as an outcast race; for the Jew is a good citizen if he is given a fair chance by the authorities, and this was all that was asked by the tolerant Roman Empire. Religious persecution must unhappily be admitted to be an invention of Christianity, and the responsibility of those who debased a creed of love into an insistence upon dogmatic purity which caused the death of millions of people is heavy before the bar of History, though they always acted from the purest of motives. But whenever the Roman Empire persecuted the Christians it was always for a political and never for a religious motive. They were persecuted because they refused to comply with the laws of the Roman State, and for no other reason.

This tolerance of all faiths which did not impose the breaking of the law upon their followers explains why the Jews were left alone, and even favoured for their natural talents. They could not, however, escape envy of their riches, and Tacitus expresses the opinion of the Roman mob, when he calls them a race of men hated by the gods.

The Jews were none the less very powerful in the early days of the empire. Agrippa and the younger Drusus, son of the Emperor Tiberius, were brought up together. Herod Agrippa was a close friend of the Emperor Claudius; and Titus, who sacked Jerusalem, would have made the Jewish princess Berenice his wife if he had not been afraid of the scandal. Nero had a favourite Jewish actor, Aliturus, who was reputed to be the lover of the Empress Poppæa and to have induced her to become a Jewess. It was certainly due

to her interference that the Apostles Peter and Paul were released from prison in the first instance, for she was prevailed upon by Aliturus to exercise her influence with Nero, and Aliturus in turn had been persuaded by the historian Josephus, his friend. It is alleged by St. John Chrysostom, writing three hundred and fifty years later that the execution of St. Paul was due to the jealousy of the emperor, who disliked the influence obtained by the Apostle over his wife; for it appears that this lady, who had jettisoned a couple of husbands in order to become Nero's empress, had nevertheless a conscience which was pricked by the Apostle into a gloom displeasing to her august spouse. The influence of the Jews at court was so great that it aroused the ill feeling of the Roman nobility. Perhaps the very name of Agrippa, assumed by the Jewish kings, was taken out of compliment, and in acknowledgment of his patronage, to Marcus Agrippa the statesman and son-in-law of Augustus.

At the end of the first century the anger of Domitian, jealous and suspicious of any power but his own, fell upon the Jews, and they were driven out to the Aventine, where they lived in caves and thickets. Twenty years later Trajan allowed them to return to the city, and for a thousand years they were never disturbed. They pushed their colonies over the Tiber, and grew steadily in wealth and numbers. In the twelfth century they ruled Rome politically as well as financially. The Jewish house of the Leoni (called Pierleoni after Pietro, its founder) seized the chief stronghold of the city—the fortress of the Castel Sant' Angelo; one of their scions, Anacletus, was nominally anti-Pope, and really the possessor of the whole Papal power from 1130–39. They supported the Republican movement of Arnold of Brescia, and Giordano Pierleone was president of the Roman Senate which killed Pope Lucius when the latter attacked the Capitol in 1145. It took an alliance between Nicolas Brakespeare (Hadrian IV, the only English Pope) and Frederick Barbarossa to break their power, by destroying the Roman mob and executing Arnold; and even then they still retained immense authority, with the possession of the theatre of Marcellus, for

another fifty years. They disappear suddenly, and their final fall is marked by a number of oppressive measures against their race. The Jews were, for example, compelled to wear, first, a yellow circle on the breast of their outer garment, and later a scarlet cloak. They were forced to hear sermons once a week; and the Roman people gave full vent to their rather cruel humour in their treatment of the Jews during carnival. A number of selected Jews were made to eat a very heavy meal, and then run in races against unstuffed Christians. They were maltreated, insulted, and ridiculed in other ways, and there is little doubt that the Punch and Judy shows were originally intended as a burlesque of a Jewish *ménage*. The shape of Punch's nose, his avaricious and heartless behaviour, and the name of his wife (Judy = *Giudea*, a Jewess) are fairly conclusive evidence. Punch and Judy shows are still common and popular in Rome, though they have long lost any political significance.

In 1556 Rome followed the example of Venice and created her Ghetto—that part of the city wherein the Jews were isolated from the rest of the population—and Pope Paul IV compelled them to wear a special yellow cap in the case of men, and a hair-net in the case of women, whenever they went outside the boundaries of their quarter. The Ghetto, which was situated on the traditional site of the first Jewish settlement in Rome down on the south bank of the Tiber near the theatre of Marcellus, was a city within a city, with walls and gates and privileges of its own. Indeed, the tolerance of the Church towards the Jewish infidels was only less astonishing than her intolerance towards Christian heretics; and yet the contrast does not imply any illogicality. For the Jew was irretrievably damned unless he was converted, whereas the soul of the Christian, however fallen from grace, could always be saved by the destruction of his body. Undoubtedly, also, the Jews owed much of their freedom from ecclesiastical persecution to their skill in medicine, and the Jewish doctors were the only infidels who had access to the Holy Father.

However this may be, the Jews lived undisturbed in their

city for three hundred years, on the same spot where they had previously dwelt for thirteen hundred years, and thus a Roman Jew has a better claim to be descended from the ancient Romans than any of his Gentile fellow-citizens. The Inquisition does not seem to have touched the inhabitants of the Ghetto, and, indeed, the very Pope who made it such a terror to the Romans himself established the Jews in this safe segregation. He also gave them special privileges, such as the freehold of their houses at fixed rents for all time. He may have intended to inflict upon them insult and punishment, but as a matter of fact the Ghetto proved to them a boon and protection, for the possession of this sanctuary preserved them from the violence of the common people.

The Ghetto and its peculiar inhabitants are gone to-day, swept away in the reconstruction of the city by the new Italian Government. It was, indeed, impossible to leave in a city with any pretensions to be modernized a spot so unsavoury that the only marvel is that the plague had not exterminated its residents or the Tiber washed them away years before. Life in the old Ghettoes of Europe has been so often described that there is no need to repeat here what has been better said by others ; but for an understanding of the queer mysterious existence led by these strange folk the reader should consult the two books written upon the Jews of central Europe by the brothers Tharaud—" Quand Israel est Roi " and " Sous l'Ombre de la Croix." To-day in Rome there is no trace of any separate Jewish community, save one synagogue down on the old site by the Tiber. The Jews are, however, merged with the Italians, and it is only by a special aptitude for bargaining, by a special extravagance of gesture, and by a peculiar liquidity of the eye that one can distinguish in the occasional shopkeeper a scion of the house of Abraham.

Before leaving the subject of the foreign colonies there is one other community of which a word must be said—the fraternity of Irish monks who serve the Church of San Clemente down between the Colosseum and St. John in the Lateran. The church is the most enthralling in Rome, for

not only are there bits of building in it ranging from a fragment of the wall built round Rome when the city was ruled by kings up to the modern tenth-century edifice which is now the actual church, but also the said church is built above one of the finest temples of Mithras yet discovered. I would that space and relevancy permitted me to tell the story of Mithras and his worship, whose struggle with Christianity was so severe that the Church of San Clemente seems like a monument of victory erected over the corpse of a defeated enemy of Christ; or to describe how my devoted form was insinuated through a hole one foot square in the main street of Santa Maria Capua Vetere in order to visit a newly discovered temple of the god. But it must suffice to say that Mithraitic remains are found in every province of the empire from Syria to Britain; and that my efforts to see his portrait have confirmed the belief of an Italian town in the inherent insanity of the English. The cherubic Irish priest who shows you round the damp underworld of San Clemente has, however, a better appreciation of the peculiarities of the sightseer, and has a brogue as rich as his humour. He and you will be far more interested in the story of the baby left for a year under the waters of the Black Sea, and restored miraculously to its mother, or the gross discourtesy of St. Alexius to his wife, than in the ogling Cupids of Bernini; and you will join in his fat chuckle as he points out to you the graphic curses inscribed on the picture of the building of the church, wherein the overseer tells the workmen exactly what he thinks of them in the earliest recorded Italian inscription.

I have left this Irishman to the last of the sketches of the foreign colonies of Rome because he is the most human, and closes most fittingly the roll of those who throughout the ages have made their habitation in the Mother of Cities. And now I pass to the city herself, and to the consideration of the homes and palaces which have housed her citizens and their guests.

CHAPTER II

ROMAN HOUSES

THERE are many cities, of course, far older than Rome, but none with such a continuous history of habitation. For two thousand six hundred and seventy-seven years it is recorded in history and in legend that men have lived on this spot, and it is more than probable that there were human settlements there long before the date which is officially fixed as that of the founding of the city. Only once has she been left entirely desolate, and that only for a space of forty days after her capture by Totila, that same Gothic king who destroyed the Villa of Hadrian at Tivoli (547). The reason for this extraordinary continuity is that, in spite of the famous sarcasm of Alaric,[1] not one of those who attacked her desired her destruction; and that when she ceased to be the centre of the political she became that of the spiritual world. A man could no more conceive of a world without Rome than of himself without a heart, or better, perhaps, a liver, for Rome performed in the body politic rather the part of that more prosaic organ. "Romae quoque homines moriuntur" ("Even at Rome men die"). The note of surprise in the saying forces one instinctively to add the corollary, "But Rome dies not."

Nowhere more than in her buildings does Rome testify to this continuity. From the very earliest times the Romans never destroyed anything made with hands. Their builders who were charged with the embellishment or the extension of the city invariably incorporated the older constructions in their new work, or else built the new on top of the old, and their successors have generally adhered to this policy. Even Pagan temples and monuments were not always destroyed

[1] His reply to the deputation of Romans who came to threaten him with the number of the people and the majesty of the Senate: "The thicker the hay, the easier to mow."

by victorious Christianity. Many were converted into Christian churches; for example, the temple of Antoninus and Faustina in the Forum and the Pantheon of Marcus Agrippa. Sometimes even public institutions were thus sanctified when customs or poverty prevented the continuance of their original use. The preservation of so much of the Colosseum is due to its dedication to the Passion of Christ by Benedict XIV, and there is still a little chapel therein whose altar light casts a comforting beam into its gloomy passages on dark nights. Similarly the Baths of Diocletian have been partially preserved by the conversion of its entrance hall into the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Even where there was demolition in whole or in part the materials were scrupulously preserved and used for Christian buildings or public works. There is hardly a mediaeval edifice in Rome, lay or ecclesiastical, which does not contain columns or blocks chiselled by the masons of the Cæsars, and this serves to mitigate the disappointment at the comparative scarcity of unadulterated classical remains and at the dilapidated condition of the few that still exist in their original shape. The worst example of the habit of using Roman monuments as quarries is probably afforded by the action of Sixtus IV in removing some thousands of tons of brickwork from the Baths of Diocletian for the purpose of making foundations for his new streets; the best is the use of the Colosseum for the construction of over forty palaces, including the Palazzo Barberini and the Palazzo Farnese. It gives some idea of the scale of the Flavian amphitheatre that it could provide the materials for such vast buildings without seeming to miss them. The Romans have preserved a memory of this vandalism in the saying, "Quod non fecerunt Barbari, fecerunt Barberini"[1]; but in truth, so far as the Colosseum is concerned, the vandalism was rather intelligent; for the whole west side was destroyed in the earthquake of 1348, and the demolition consisted merely in

[1] "What the barbarians dared not the Barberini did." The allusion is to Urban VII, builder of the Palazzo Barberini, who belonged to that family.

carting away the fallen masonry. The best proof that there was little deliberate destruction is found in the words of an ancient statue, imposing a heavy fine on anybody guilty of pilfering materials from an ancient building: "Ne ruinis civitas deformaretur, et ut antiqua ædificia decorem Urbis perpetuo representent." [1]

The private houses of ancient Rome have suffered a meaner but more preserving fate, for they have simply been incor porated in one form or another in later buildings. This again increases the scarcity of Roman remains recognizable as such; but the main reason for the difficulty in finding them is the layer of earth, generally about ten feet deep, which has superimposed itself on Rome since the Imperial epoch. The cause of this phenomenon is obscure. Earthquakes have no doubt partially occasioned it, but I am inclined to think that the main cause is merely the drifting of dust into the hollows in the course of centuries.

These peculiarities of the Roman builders, the dispersion of the artistic treasures from their original sites, and their collection into the multitudinous museums of the city, make any intelligent reconstruction an extremely difficult task. The most common method is to pursue an irregular course through the welter of museums and galleries, breaking off now and then to visit the more complete Roman relics—the Colosseum, Pantheon, Baths of Caracalla, etc. The net result is a confusion of which the dear old lady who, on entering the Colosseum, could not conceal her astonishment at the absence of a stage, is no exaggerated example. I am only too conscious that the more one lives in Rome the less one knows about it; and there are those who have lived therein forty years, only to confess that they are but on the threshold of understanding. I therefore give my ideas on how to understand Rome and her treasures with unfeigned humility and reserve.

Some smattering of Roman history is essential, otherwise Consuls, Prætors, Quæstors, Tribunes, and Imperators will

[1] "Lest the beauty of the State be spoiled by the ruins, and in order that the ancient buildings may perpetually call to mind the glory of the city."

be a crowd of formless ghosts. Nothing very profound is necessary, and the relics of a classical education are generally sufficiently numerous to provide the proper groundwork.

If the reader is ambitious, he should read up the better-known stories of Greek and Roman mythology, otherwise, be he never so artistic, his guide never so garrulous, and his guide-book never so exhaustive, the principal sculptures will have little meaning for him. Some of the fundamental rules for the interpretation of inscriptions should also be studied, for otherwise the abbreviations are heart-breaking. I will give some of the most common. COS. = Consul (the figure which follows indicates the number of times the person referred to has held that office). F. = Filius (son). P.P. = Pater Patriæ, father of his country, a title of honour bestowed on magistrates or generals who had saved the State, and with frequency upon the emperors, whether they had done anything of the kind or not. TRIB. POT. = Tribunicia Potestas, the power of the Tribunes of the people, so immense under the Republic, which was assumed by Augustus and his successors as an essential sanction of their authority. IMP. = Imperator, the title in virtue of which the emperors were heads of the army, and from which the word emperor is itself derived, inasmuch as the position of commander-in-chief was the principal source of their power. PONT. MAX. = Pontifex Maximus, the title of the chief priest of the Roman hierarchy, assumed by the emperors and afterwards by the Popes. S.P. = Sua Pecunia = at his own expense. D. = Decreto = by the decree of, etc. There are also the abbreviations of prænomina, or, as we should say, of Christian names, e.g. Q. = Quintus; L. = Lucius = Lewis; M. = Marcus = Mark; P. = Publius; C., G., or CN. = Caius, Gaius, or Cnæus = Charles. Thus the inscription on the Pantheon, "M. AGRIPPA.L.F. COS.III. FECIT." = "MARCUS AGRIPPA LUCII FILIUS CONSUL TER FECIT" = "Marcus Agrippa, the son of Lucius, built (this work) in his third consulship." The exact date may be calculated by looking up the year when Agrippa was consul for the third time. On some inscriptions the day and the month are

given in the cumbrous Roman jargon about Kalends and Ides. I apologize if these few indications are too elementary. They are given upon the assumption that the reader has never studied the ponderous tomes of the "Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum," and that on arrival in Rome he will be glad to know roughly what he is looking at. I should perhaps add that the Romans nearly always took some subordinate title indicative of their personal exploits, such as DALMATICUS, PARTHICUS, SARMATICUS, GERMANICUS, or AFRICANUS, meaning (often falsely) "Conqueror of Dalmatia, Parthia, Sarmatia, Germany, or Africa.

Sightseeing is not only the most muddling but the most exhausting of proceedings, and it is quite impossible to indulge in it with any enjoyment for more than two, or in the case of exceptionally robust persons, more than three, days a week. When I first came to Rome I had formed the plan of dividing the places to be visited into epochs, and doing one epoch before embarking upon another. It was a hopeless failure. The whole temperament of Rome, the amazing complexity of the remains, the extent of the ground to be covered—all forbade it. I therefore proceeded on this wise: I walked as rapidly as possible through the various regions of the city, beginning with a long sojourn upon the Janiculum, in order to obtain a concise idea of the geography. I then visited all the better-known spots, and etched them in upon my historical and topographical background. Finally, I took up certain periods and aspects of Roman life, and followed up all the traces I could find referring thereto; for example, I tried to reconstruct a picture of the city as it appeared under the Julian and Claudian houses, then under the Flavians, and finally under the Antonines. I then turned to the pre-Christian religions, to early Christianity, and so on to the full development of the activity of the building Popes. From the Tiber and his history there was a natural transition to the aqueducts, and from thence to the great public baths and theirs. I followed round the wall of Aurelian in an attempt to form an idea of the defences of Rome, and this led me to take an interest in the legionary

system and the organization and distribution of the Roman armies, whose task was as wide-flung and as difficult as that of our own. And finally I took each emperor separately and tried to find out what traces he had left on Rome. Then I settled down to read about what I had seen, and have been reading ever since in the intervals of following the activities of Signor Mussolini.

So much for classical Rome, whose study, of course, implies frequent excursions into the mediaeval city. The method is not without its drawbacks, but it is extremely pleasant, and it is not muddling.

Though I shall not attempt to make any classification of Roman buildings here, it may be of interest to mention one or two general aids to the placing in their proper period of those which the visitor will encounter. The earliest building, whether Roman or not, employed enormous blocks of stone, and traces of their handiwork may still be seen here and there. These traces are usually called prehistoric. Examples are the huge wall which runs round part of the plateau on the summit of Monte Cavo, and pieces of the so-called Servian wall, or wall of Servius Tullius, King of Rome, in the city itself, the principal fragment of which lies near the fork of the Viale del Aventino and the Viale di Porta San Paolo.

These early remains are sometimes inaccurately described as Cyclopean, and once gave rise to the theory of a " Pelasgian " civilization existing in Italy in prehistoric times. The reader may remember Macaulay's verse :

> In lordly Volaterra
> Where stands the far-famed hold
> Piled by the hands of giants
> For God-like Kings of old.

This was inspired by a wall composed of these huge blocks which is still visible in the citadel of Velletri. It is agreed by most archæologists to-day that this form of building merely represents the refortification by the early Romans of the strong places captured by them from neighbouring rival cities.

The characteristic of Roman building proper is the long, narrow bricks, beautifully fitted together, and giving in the mass the impression of enormous solidity and strength. These masses of brick were, at least under the empire, generally faced with marble or some other precious material, and if one scratches at the base of a wall one is nearly certain to find some fragment thereof. Enormous quantities of it have been incorporated in various churches; but still more, including very many irreplaceable statues, were burned for lime by the builders of the Middle Ages. One may exclaim at both these kinds of robbery, but the former in reality preserved what would otherwise have been lost; for every scrap of metal or material of any value was sifted out of the rubbish and sold by the Jews.

For certain of the more pretentious buildings stone blocks were employed, e.g. for the construction of the various imperial fora, or the theatre of Marcellus; but the brick, with its beautiful dull red colour, is the unmistakable sign of Roman work. It looks particularly effective in the round arch. So attractive is it to the eye that the Renaissance builders copied the colour, and the prevalent note of the older quarter of modern Rome is the same dull red, verging sometimes on a yellow tinge. They developed an extraordinary skill, which the modern Roman inherits, in working in that bastard product of marble, stucco, and somehow or other succeeded in making attractive what in other countries and climates would appear hideous. I have tried in vain to find anything intrinsically beautiful in the Roman baroque palaces, but I must admit that in the bulk they achieve a pleasing effect. This is probably due to their magnificent proportions. They have never been equalled in size by anything until the advent of the monster hotel. The Palazzo Doria, for example, at the right-hand south end of the Corso, once housed a thousand retainers of the family. All the great palaces—Doria, Borghese, Rospigliosi, Cætani, Chigi, Sciarra, Barberini, etc.—are now let out into flats, or for museums, galleries, clubs, libraries, and even newspaper offices. The new quarter of the Prati, like most of the

suburbs, is a horrid vista of shining and unrelieved whiteness, but it will tone down, and there are some charming interiors even now.

A complete knowledge of the materials used by the Roman builders in different ages enables the expert to date with certainty most of the crumbling remains which have nothing else recognizable about them except their names which have come down to us. It is a fact that builders in different periods used bricks of various sizes and colours, and mortar of different composition. In later days many bricks and tiles were stamped with the name of the factory where they were made, and sometimes with the name of the reigning emperor. The science of studying these differences is now being perfected by the American archæologist Miss Van Deman, and is expected to lead to very valuable results. But it is too long and technical a subject to be adequately dealt with here.

There is generally a good deal of building activity in Rome. Not only is the winter influx of strangers growing year by year in volume, but also an effort is being made to attract some industrial establishments to the city in order to make it more in accordance with the conventional ideas of a modern capital. And so it happens that a city which was once so terribly overhoused is afflicted with the same shortage as other European centres of population. I think that in Rome and in other Italian cities the problem is being faced with more common sense than in Britain. The separate house, with separate drainage, lighting, kitchens, etc., is no doubt the ideal, but it is the most extravagant and unpractical form of housing conceivable. The Italian system is to build enormous blocks of workmen's flats, with a central staircase. These blocks are not beautiful and the open staircase winding up the centre of the edifice gives the same effect of an indecent showing of the insides as a glass-fronted grandfather clock or a carcase hanging in a butcher's. But they are cheap enough to allow of the individual flats being let at economic rents, and the massing of so many houses under one roof results in all being efficiently lighted by electricity at an infinitesimal cost. In some cases the experiment has been

made of central kitchens, wash-houses, fuel storage, etc., though this is not yet the general rule.

It must not be thought that privacy is destroyed. Each flat is self-contained, and each possesses its little balcony, which serves for the display of intimate linen, over whose mass, or between whose streamers, the bright-eyed women peep forth at the sights of the street, as from behind the lattice-work of an Eastern seraglio. The washing, of every conceivable colour, variety, and shape, gives the house a gala appearance, as if hung with flags, and reminds one of the family bedspreads hung out at festivals by the Portuguese as their proudest and most valuable possession. There is one drawback to this system. As I have remarked in a previous chapter, the Italian woman is not, as a rule, a good housewife, and her abode is far from being as clean as a new pin. Moreover, the common property, such as the staircase, is everybody's, and therefore nobody's, business, and becomes the unwholesome repository of grease and dirt in various forms. Still, the new blocks are infinitely superior to the old houses of the poor, which may be seen in all their squalor in the old quarter of Rome, where the imperial slum of the Suburra has many worthy successors. Here dark portals of sweating stone lead into gloomy, humid passages, where a single electric light, its globe coated with dirt, sheds a feeble glimmer on a ghostly impurity. The rooms are low and have once been plastered, but the plaster is grimed out of recognition. The floors are of planks and dirt—chiefly the latter—and from the whole exudes the indescribable musty smell of damp age, mingled with the incessantly renewed fumes of cookery. The mixture is thickened by the perfumes of the long strings of onions and garlic hanging from the roof and walls, the acrid smoke of a wood fire, and the sickening tang of imperfectly preserved meat is contributed by one or two hams. The streets are dark, narrow, and so tortuous that no wind can blow down them. They receive, therefore, from every doorway in undiluted force, as from so many tributaries to the river of smell, gouts of rich odours. There is one slum that is better than the others, namely, Trastevere, and this

because many of the houses are built according to the mediaeval habit of presenting blank walls to the main street and having the entry behind or giving on to side alleys. This ensured to the Trasteverines their jealously cherished privacy, and also preserved them from sudden attacks from the street.

The squalor of the Roman slums may excite horror, but it is almost irremovable, for it arises from the old difficulties which have always stood in the way of efficient town-planning in the city, and never more so than to-day; for the building sites in the centre of Rome are very strictly limited, particularly now that the centre of activity has shifted way from the Palatine, the Quirinal, and, indeed, all the Seven Hills, and become concentrated in the low-lying ground between the hills and the Tiber, which may be roughly described as the Campo Marzio district. Nor can the population well shift to the outskirts, for public conveyances are confined to a few trams and buses, which are nevertheless too many for the narrowness of the streets. There is no underground railway, and it is said that the soil is of such a character that it is almost impossible to construct one. If, therefore, the people went to live far out they would have fearful difficulty in going to and coming from their work; and thus the slum appears to be a permanency. Skyscrapers could, of course, be constructed, but at the cost of the destruction of masses of interesting remains which are embodied and embedded in the present houses. And a skyscraper at Rome would be almost blasphemous.

Most of the well-to-do families live in flats or *villinos* in the new quarter, though there are some of the old princely houses who still retain a corner of their ancestral dwelling. The competition of strangers has raised the price of flats to monstrous proportions, and nowhere is the one-sided character of the Monroe Doctrine more in evidence. The well-meaning sons and daughters of America persevere in their unconscious but irritating policy of making life in Europe impossible for the native modestly equipped with the defeated rivals of the dollar, and even the most prehistoric of Roman princes has at last realized the letting value of his *palazzo*.

The only chance for a reasonable bargain is to start hunting in the summer, a pursuit which should be vicariously indulged in, if one can find a friend sufficiently altruistic to trip round the city on one's behalf. And it is advisable to make sure that the gentleman who offers one a flat is really the proprietor. I know one foreigner who made a delightful bargain for a flat not a thousand miles from the Victor Emmanuel monument, who paid over six months' rent and received his key. Arriving with his wife and family he found his flat occupied by the proprietor, who was no earthly relation to the gentleman with whom the bargain had been struck. The latter had disappeared and was no more seen—nor was my friend's money.

Here and there are still to be found persons whom philanthropy or obstinacy have kept behind the age. One such is the proprietor of the locality where I have my own modest dwelling. Wild horses would not drag from me the exact site, and it is unknown to the taxi drivers, though I have taken a good many of them there in the last two years. But the Roman taxi driver is like the Mayfly—his life appears to last only twenty-four hours; for although I always hail a cab from the same rank I never have had the same driver nor the same vehicle twice, so that my secret is safe. And there I live in the midst of a huge wild garden, inhabited by ants and the ghosts of the bloodiest of Roman emperors, where even the screech of the trams comes up like distant music, no louder than the hum of the mosquitoes in search of their evening meal. Great pines grow there, and the flowers of the earth bloom in due season—the wild anemone, the trailing wistaria, and the gaudy flaunting Judas tree. There are hosts of blackbirds stirring in the bushes. The night is loud with nightingales, and up and down, in and out, in the evening dusk, dance the battalions of fireflies. I think they are the torches of the spirits of Greek slaves playing at the Lampadephoria, their speed and direction rather wan and uncertain because their bodies have been dead so long. The shining Roman moon turns all to black and silver, and a little breeze bears the sound of water falling in the fountain up among

the trees. A stronger breath parts the branches of those lining the edge of the garden with a rustling sigh, as much as to say, " Look what I will show you." And there out in front, over a sea of roofs, stands high and proud the greatest of all Roman houses, St. Peter's and God's, with the silver splendour from Heaven falling upon it like a visible consecration.

CHAPTER III

ROMAN WATERS

AMONG all the relics which ancient Rome has left to astonish posterity none is more stupendous and impressive than the ruins of the great aqueducts which trail their broken lengths over the Campagna, like the vertebræ of some colossal lizard. They are the first objects which differentiate Rome from other cities to the eyes of the traveller; and his train, as it rolls into the station, actually passes through and under that constructed by the Emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero, and called the "Aqua Claudia" after them. For twenty minutes previously, if he looks out of the right-hand window of his carriage, he will see the double line of the Claudia and the Marcia trooping down from the Alban Hills. The history of the building and existence of these aqueducts is a romance which has never fully been written, though the reader will find a full description of the immense water supply system of which they were the framework in the book of Sextus Julius Frontinus, their curator under Trajan in the first decade of the second century.

The Romans were never insensible to the real or supposed evidences of their own greatness, and had the occasional faculty of distinguishing the flashy from the durable. In truth, they anticipated most of the refinements of modern civilization, and the American citizen who installs in his house an elaborate system of central heating would doubtless be surprised to learn that he was merely copying an invention of eighteen hundred years ago. It is stated to have been a Roman knight of the time of Augustus, a certain Sergius Orata, who first conceived the idea of carrying steam from water heated in a central reservoir to every room of a house by means of terra-cotta pipes built into the walls; and the pitch of elaboration to which his invention was carried may

be perfectly observed in the ruins of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli. Whether he invented the system or not, it is certain that after his time the Romans were extremely expert in the science of conveying vapour or water through comparatively small pipes; and it is not without reason that the historian Dionysius enumerates among the "three things the most magnificent in Rome, which especially attest the greatness of the Roman Empire," the aqueducts and the drains. The other is the paved roads; and it is interesting that the same works are expressly distinguished as remarkable by mediaeval visitors to the city.

Pliny the Elder gives a full account of the method of constructing an aqueduct. He says: "The best method of diverting a spring into a watercourse is to use terra-cotta pipes two fingers thick, inserted one into the other at the points of junction, the one above fitting into the one below. The junctions should be smeared with quicklime soaked in oil. To ensure a proper flow of water the pipes should have an inclination of at least a quarter of an inch in every hundred feet, and if the water be conveyed underground, there should be ventilating shafts let in every two hundred feet. When it is desired to force the water to a higher level, lead pipes should be employed. Water, it should be remembered, always rises to the level of its source. If, again, the water is brought from a considerable distance it should be made to rise and fall at intervals." He proceeds to give the proper measurements and weights of the various kinds of pipes; to urge that large pipes should be used in cases of sudden variations of gradient in order to diminish the force of the fall; and that reservoirs should be constructed in which water would be accumulated for the service of branch lines.

It appears from this account that the transportation of water on arches was not mere ostentation, and indeed there is far more of the aqueducts under than above ground. The above-ground method was employed only where necessitated by the task of carrying water from one group of hills to another, and was the only way to ensure a steady flow under such circumstances without the danger of bursting the pipes.

Nor is an aqueduct a simple pipe conveying water by the most direct route from its source to Rome. The course was not, indeed, devious, and when a rise was encountered it was cheerfully tunnelled through, the channel being faced where necessary with stone or brick. But at comparatively short intervals the pipe was slightly bent so as to break the force of the flow, and Pliny's other recommendations were faithfully carried out. The ventilation holes served not only to ease the flow, but as waste pipes when there was too great a head of water in the main channel. Reservoirs were constructed at frequent intervals, of such a size that they are frequently mistaken for something else; for example, it is probable that the villa of Cicero at Tusculum is really only such a reservoir. Filters were also put in here and there, for the water, though excellent, is very calcareous, and but for these filters, the deposit would speedily have choked the pipes. Indeed, one aqueduct, constructed by Hadrian in the year A.D. 130, became unserviceable, and was known as the "Damnata," or condemned water. Finally the aqueduct debouched into huge central reservoirs within the city, usually elaborately ornamented and called "Nymphæa"; and the water was thence distributed by small lead pipes to the private houses of the citizens. It also supplied all public and private baths, fountains, etc.

The water supply was originally under the charge of the censors and ædiles, until Augustus appointed special "Curatores Aquarum," and a new officer called "Surveyor of the Aqueducts." The volume of water required for Imperial Rome was enormous. At the epoch of the city's greatest prosperity and luxury eleven of these monster undertakings were in full blast, and no less than seventeen were constructed at one time or another. Of these one only, the Marcia, is sufficient to supply the domestic needs of the modern capital, with the exception of Trastevere. It is true, of course, that the days when the Roman rabble had the right of almost free entry into some of the most splendid palaces in the world for the purpose of bathing, eating, and exercising are over, and the demand for water is visibly less. It is also

true that the construction of such public works was a favourite method of the masters of the Roman world for ingratiating themselves with the populace ; and whereas our own kings went to the length of providing fountains running with wine, the Roman emperors stuck to water with the determination of a modern temperance fanatic. Suetonius, the garrulous and prurient chronicler of the first century Cæsars, reports that Augustus answered the complaint of the citizens as to the shortage and high price of wine with the remark that they could quench their thirst with the new water brought so copiously into the city by himself and his son-in-law Agrippa. But however much their construction may be ascribed to luxury and self-interest, the works which supplied Rome with water are one of the best evidences that she was indeed the greatest city in the world.

The eleven great sources of her health and pleasure fall into four distinct groups. Two come from the Lakes of Bracciano and Martignano (formerly Alsietina), in the Tuscan foothills, the Alsietina and the Trajana. The former was constructed by Augustus, probably to supply the water for the large artificial lake, dug on the other side of the Tiber, near the Porta Portuensis, where the first emperor gave the people the spectacle of a naval gladiatorial fight, and which Nero afterwards converted into a scene of debaucheries for the celebration of his new festival of the Juvenalia, or Coming-of-Age. The water is, as Frontinus remarks, unpleasant to the taste, and could not have been used for any other public purpose. The Trajana was brought in, as its name implies, a century later by the Emperor Trajan, and is still used. It has been seen by every visitor to St. Peter's rising from the fountains in front of the Basilica, and by every one who mounts the Janiculum gushing from the great fountain on the left of the road leading to the Garibaldi statue. This fountain was built by Pope Paul V in 1612, who also restored the whole aqueduct, and from whom the water is now known as the " Aqua Paola." It is this water which supplies the quarter of Trastevere.

The second group of aqueducts comprised the Tepula and

the Julia, whose sources are in the Alban Hills. The Tepula is called after the little stream of that name, which rises in the fields of Lucullus, near Grottaferrata. The Julia was really the sister of the Tepula, and at the outset merely increased the flow of the latter's waters by drawing upon some additional springs. Seven miles from the city, however, the common stream (together with that of the Marcia) entered a large filter, and emerged from it as two distinct aqueducts, though carried on the same arches. This work was carried out by the indefatigable Agrippa in the year 34 B.C., and he probably called the water "Julia" out of compliment to his master's uncle, the great Julius Cæsar. Neither of these waters is now used.

Three more—the Appia, the Virgo, and the Alexandrina—come from the Sabine foothills. The Appia fs the oldest of all the imported waters, and takes its name from the constructor of the aqueduct, the haughty censor, Appius Claudius, called Cæcus, or "the blind," who brought it into the city in 312 B.C. The springs from which he drew the water still exist, but are allowed to run to waste. If the Appia is the oldest, the Virgo is the most romantic of all the waters. Two stories are told in explanation of its charming name. It is said that a party of Roman soldiers returning from the siege of Prænestе were overcome by fatigue and thirst when still distant eight miles from the city. They could find no water to relieve their distress, until suddenly a peasant maid appeared who led them a short distance off the main road to where a clear, cool spring bubbled up from the ground. The soldiers drank their fill, and went on their way rejoicing, having first bestowed upon the saving water the name of Virgo, or the Virgin, in honour of the girl who had succoured them. The other account says that near the spring of the Virgo rises another stream called that of Hercules. But the former coyly refuses to join the latter, as a young girl shrinks (or would shrink in less forward days) from the embraces of the opposite sex, and from this obstinate celibacy derives its title. It is certainly a fact that close to the source of the Virgo is a spring of quite a different character, being one of mineral water.

The Virgo herself is lovely to the taste and to the sight, as she bursts out in a cataract of foam from the pipes of the Trevi fountain, and she retains her romantic character to the last; for if you throw her a halfpenny where she lies in the huge basin of the fountain she will work a great magic for you, and bring you back to Rome before you die. At least so says the legend; but it is significant that its most ardent prophets are the ragged urchins clustered round the fountain's edge. Besides this greatest of all Roman fountains, the Virgo supplies those in the Piazza Navona and the Piazza Farnese, and all the waters of the Villa Borghese are the Virgin's also. Thus this aqueduct is the oldest of those actually in use at the present day, and water has flowed in its channel for 1,946 years. The Marcia was tapped earlier, but its ancient channel has fallen into disuse, and prosaic iron pipes have replaced the stately conduit by which it formerly travelled to Rome.

The last of this group, the Alexandrina, was built by the unhappy Alexander Severus, the last of the house of the great Septimius, who set up his arch in the Forum, and was the only master of the whole empire to die in England. Alexander built his aqueduct on the remains of the Aqua Damnata of Hadrian, as far as Centocelle, and perhaps he may have thought of the evil omen when the ministers of death entered his tent by the Rhine. But the water itself, though taken from a source near that of the Damnata, is pure, and has won for itself in later days the name of "Aqua Felice," "the happy" or "lucky water." It is quaffed by the Triton in the great fountain of the Piazza Barbarini, and by the little tortoises in that of the Piazza Mattei, and its old reservoir may be seen in the Nymphæum of Alexander Severus on the Esquiline. It is also this water which is ceaselessly ejected by the demure lions guarding the fountain in the Via XX Settembre, near the Grand Hotel, in what always seems to me a very comical manner.

The greatest by far in volume of all the Roman waters is the group which springs from the valley of the Anio above Tivoli, and comprises the Anio Vetus, the Marcia, the Claudia,

and the Anio Novus. The first dates from 272 B.C., and is therefore the second of the great aqueducts to be called into existence by the increasing needs of victorious Rome. But just over a century later, when she had completed the conquest of the Mediterranean and the Levant, and the spoils of war had made her the centre of the world, even this supply proved insufficient. The prætor, Quintus Marcius Rex, was therefore instructed to " search diligently whether there were not other streams which he might bring to the city." So says Frontinus, who adds that the prætor " restored the former aqueducts, and added a third, built with cut stones and larger pipes, employing three thousand masons for the task." This third was the Aqua Marcia, sixty-one miles in length from its source to Rome, and representing the mighty effort of which the newly enriched State was capable. It is in some sense the memorial of the proud city of Carthage, for it was completed just three years after the site of the great rival of Rome was ploughed over and sown with salt, and there can be little doubt that the spoils of Carthage paid for it. So famous is the Marcia that Shakespeare himself had heard its story, in a garbled version, and uses it with a poetic disregard of chronology. In " Coriolanus," Act II, Scene 3, he makes Brutus speak of :

> The noble house o' the Marcians. . . .
> Of the same house Publius and Quintus were,
> That our best water brought by conduits hither.

To-day, also, the Marcia is very much in evidence, and though the visitor will see many antiquities, this is the only one he will use, for he can reflect, as he makes up his bundle of washing, that his dirty linen will be cleansed by water whose springs were first tapped in the year 145 B.C. The water is justly famous alike for its purity and its quantity. There is enough flow from the Marcian springs to supply one and a half million people, and, as to quality, it is dangerous only to the irreverent. The pious Tacitus reports that in the year A.D. 60 " too great a desire for luxury brought shame and danger to Nero, because he had entered, for a swim, the source of the Aqua Marcia, the same as is brought into the

city; and it seemed that he had polluted the sacred streams and the reverence due to the place by washing his body therein. A sharp illness which followed affirmed the anger of the Gods." But in Rome to-day it may be drunk without the slightest fear, and no one need feel any nervousness on a matter which often in "the abroads" occasions grave concern. As stated above, the old channel is disused, though the portion borne upon arches is one of the least dilapidated; and the absence of filters in the new pipes causes the water, when it arrives in Rome, to be very calcareous. I have spent hours with a choked kettle, regretting that the foresight of Quintus Marcius had not been copied by the moderns.

It is also an unhappy fact that we Roman householders are so dependent on a single and distant supply. Early this year (1924) there was a landslip which broke the pipe above Tivoli, and for a whole week the Roman fountains not supplied by the Marcia were thronged with swarms of people bearing every variety of vessel from a china cup, carried by a thirsty urchin, to the noble pail of hammered copper, of which a few examples have penetrated to Rome from the North. Such scenes must have been often witnessed in the old days, when the citizens of the early Republic could rely only upon the local springs. The crowds of 1924 were good-humoured and treated the inconvenience as a joke; but I thought of the crowd of fourteen hundred years ago, when the Gothic besieger had broken the aqueducts and the parched citizens must have cried for water as they never cried for "bread and games," and when the stern Belisarius rode desperately from side to side of the frantic city to sustain the courage and to support the arms of his scanty troops. For over a year (537–38) he held out, and saved the city for a time. But at what a cost! The aqueducts were broken, their arches incorporated in the city walls for the needs of the defence, and with the total or partial loss of her water supply Rome fell from her proud eminence as the conquest of Alaric had never caused her to fall. Never again were the great Baths of Diocletian opened, and with the lack of cleansing water came the horrible pestilences which swept the city

THE FAMOUS CASCADES OF TIVOLI

time and again from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries. The Aqua Marcia went with the rest, and not until 1870 did a modern limited liability company, strange substitute for a Roman emperor, again bring it to Rome. This company is called the " Pia," in honour of Pope Pius IX, and its water is now sometimes known by that name. But it is really the old Aqua Marcia, which rises from the first fountain the traveller sees in Rome, in the Piazza Esedra, outside the station, and it is not a bad introduction to the Roman waters, with its hundred cunningly disposed pipes throwing up a hundred feathery jets, like the ospreys on a beauty's hat.

The Claudia came from the same locality, but originated in two springs forty-five miles from the city, which are mentioned in the first inscription on the Porta Maggiore as being the Cæruleus, or blue spring, and the Curtius. Claudius also says, in the same inscription, that he joined to his aqueduct the waters of the last of this group, the Anio Novus, from the River Anio itself, taken out at a point seventeen miles farther away. The later parts of the inscription tell how less than forty years afterwards this great work had already fallen into disrepair, and was restored by the Flavian Emperors, Vespasian and Titus his son. The water was often disturbed and spoiled by the Anio Novus, which was muddy, particularly after heavy rains, and the whole undertaking rather reflects the mind of the Emperor Claudius himself, in that it was a sound and beneficent idea, executed with great technical skill, but muddled by a trace of stupidity. The aqueduct was afterwards used and extended by Nero, who carried it to the Cœlian, the Palatine, and the Aventine on a line of magnificent arches. The great Nymphæum, or reservoir, was on the Cœlian, and fed the lake which stood in Nero's time on the site of the Colosseum. It thus formed part of the attractions of the Golden House. These Neronian arches should be the first object to be visited and studied by anyone interested in the aqueducts, for their construction is the best of all, and some at least are finely preserved. The best general idea of the aqueducts may be obtained by going to the Porta Maggiore, where the Julia, Tepula, and Marcia are carried one on

top of another, and where, by going round the bastion outside and to the left of the gate one can see the channels of these three in section, and also the channels of the Anio Novus, the Claudia, and the Anio Vetus.

From an account of the aqueducts it is natural to pass to the baths which they supplied, the more so because their ruins are only second, if indeed second at all, in impressiveness to those of the aqueducts themselves. These great public baths form a distinctive feature of the Roman civilization. They were reproduced in every part of the empire, and they have never been approached in their magnificence by the feeble efforts of later nations which have striven to copy the Roman institutions. The population of modern cities, huddled into lodgings and flats, may think themselves lucky if they can wash off the grime of toil or remove the lassitude of dissipation in an amorphous enamelled tub, squeezed into the corner of the least considerable room of an inconsiderable apartment. Do they ever think of the gracious pools, lined with many-hued marbles, and floored with intricate mosaics, contained in halls so large that Sixtus V could take ninety-five thousand cubic metres from the Baths of Diocletian without sensibly affecting their bulk, and Gibbon reports that in his day the porter's lodge was sufficiently spacious for a considerable church? Can they imagine these vast edifices, equipped with libraries, porticos, gardens and gymnasiums, restaurants and racecourses, with thousands of slaves, masseurs, barbers, musicians, and waiters? All this was, for the Roman, summed up in the word "bath," and all might be enjoyed for a sum of something under a farthing. Under the late empire this charge appears to have been increased, for an edict of Diocletian lays down that the bath and the cloak-room attendants cannot ask for a bigger tip than two denarii per person, i.e. about sixpence. Even this charge compares favourably with the cost of a haircut in London.

It is not surprising that all the Romans from the highest to the lowest should have revelled in this luxury, that the person who gave it to them should be distinctly popular, or that there is hardly an emperor of any note, good or bad, who

did not follow this road to the public esteem. The result is that the total capacity of the baths was enormous. Caracalla's held six thousand persons at one time, and Diocletian's three thousand. We do not know how many of the countless lesser establishments provided by his predecessors survived until his day to increase the numbers of Roman bathers, but already, forty-five years before Christ, Julius Cæsar could give three million pounds weight of oil for their use ; and the great numbers which this princely legacy attests were swollen by those who had bath-rooms in their own private houses. There were many such, even in a second-rate, vulgar little town like Pompeii.

It is not my intention to elaborate the list of these establishments, for the task would be endless and wearisome. I shall therefore confine myself to a general sketch of the chief among them, and to some account of their structure and use.

The first bath-builder on a large scale appears to have been that same Agrippa whose zeal for the public cleanliness marks him out as the prototype of that alarmingly officious person known by the same name in the moral encyclopædia of Struwelpeter. He opened one hundred and seventy baths in the various cities of the empire in the year of his ædileship, traces of one of which have been found behind the Pantheon. Very famous, too, in antiquity were the baths which Nero erected in the Campus Martius, and whose site was recorded in the names of a number of small mediaeval churches between the Piazza Navona and the Piazza of S. Luigi dei Francese (e.g. San Salvatore, San Giacomo, and San Benedetto, all IN THERMIS). The epigrammatist Martial, whose vulgarity is occasionally compensated for by an apt phrase, inquires, " What could be worse than Nero, or better than Nero's baths ? "

Future ages were to answer him, for the next bath-builders were the Flavians. Their founder, Vespasian, was a parsimonious fellow ; but inasmuch as he was an upstart who had supplanted, or rather succeeded, by the conquest of his rivals to the blood of the Cæsarian house, he naturally wished to show himself more considerate than, and as generous as,

the last scion of the first Roman dynasty. He and his son, therefore, restored to the people the public ground which Nero had filched for his Golden House and Nymphæum, in the form of using it to create great pleasure-houses for the citizens. One of these was the Colosseum, and another was the Baths of Titus. Of the latter little remains, and that little is often confused with the Baths of Trajan. Now, Trajan was a foreigner, and, moreover, only the adopted son of his predecessor, so that he too, no doubt, felt the need of a little popularity at Rome while campaigning in the Syrian desert. His baths were therefore built, and are the first to be oriented north-east by south-west instead of north by south. This fact is explained by some authorities as due to the liking of the Romans for sun baths, which has survived to the present day, so that unless one allows the sun to flay the skin off one's back and burn one's face to a rich mahogany colour one is set down as a person of no account.

A hundred years after Trajan, the madman Caracalla built the huge mass on the right of the Passegiata Archæologica which bears his name. This vast work, though it took only five years to build, was so solid as to defy the ravages alike of time and the invader, and the baths were still in use far into the ninth century. Caracalla probably indulged in this luxury out of sheer bombast, for his favourite saying was that provided a monarch secured the affection of the army he could esteem the rest of his subjects as of little moment. But it was far otherwise with the next builder, the ex-slave Diocletian. With him luxury was the cloak of the baseness of his origin, and his baths were intended to console the Roman people for his having changed the hub of the empire to Nicomedia and the centre of Italy to Milan. They were in use only just over two hundred years, and from the sixth to the nineteenth century lay outside the inhabited city. Large portions of the structure foundered, thanks to the galleries driven under it by builders seeking for brick clay. Its marbles, mosaics, statues, and even humbler materials suffered the fate usually meted out by mediaeval despoilers; and it was not until Michelangelo had helped the mad Sicilian

priest, Antonio del Duca, to realize his vision of creating therein the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli that the ruins were put to any higher use than that of a quarry or a stabling for horses.

The use and service of the Roman bath may be almost too familiar to be interesting, for the type is the same wherever it is found, and it is found in most places in the Roman world. For, as Seneca said, where the Roman conquered he inhabited. But to relieve the reader from the sense of bored bewilderment when he or she is taken into a ruin and subjected to a flood of "guidese," it may be useful to describe the general form and chief technical terms of the bath. My description will be taken from the Stabian Baths at Pompeii, which are not only well preserved but also modest enough to represent the mean type, when the science of bath-construction had advanced sufficiently far from the original conception of a house to wash in, but was not yet so exaggerated that the original conception was lost in the multiplicity of side-shows.

The ordinary male citizen entered by the main gate in the centre of the south façade, and found himself at once in a large quadrilateral open space, surrounded on the south, east, and north, by porticos, above the columns of which the walls were decorated with frescoes. This space was called the palæstra, and was used for violent exercises, wrestling, etc., before or after the bath. On the west, or left, side was the swimming pool, where a cold bath could be taken, called the Piscina. But we will suppose that our Roman was feeling chilly. He therefore turned to the right, and passed under the portico into the vestibule, full of friends, with whom he exchanged a word or two of gossip before passing on to the dressing-room (apodyterium). Here he undressed and left his clothes in one of a series of rectangular niches, under the charge of a slave. He then went out through a door in the north wall of this room into the warm room (tepidarium), whose floor and walls were hollow, to allow the passage of the hot pipes. Having here worked up a gentle perspiration, he went straight on into the hot room (calidarium), which was next to the furnaces, and where he took a regular Turkish

bath. In this chamber there was a square bath of hot water (alveus), and a round basin of cold (labrum), in the latter of which he could rinse his hands and face. When he had sufficiently perspired, he passed back through the warm room into the dressing-room, where he was thoroughly rubbed down and oiled by the attendants. Possibly he now felt rather enervated, so he went back into the vestibule, and from thence, right-handed again, into a round chamber (frigidarium), where he took a shower of cold water. Finally cleansed, clothed, and in his right mind, he was ready to re-emerge into the portico and engage in the arduous work of chattering with his friends, watching the athletes exercising on the palæstra, or trying to get a peep at the ladies as they passed down the corridor from their private entrances in the north-east and north-west corners.

Modesty forbids my attempting a similar reconstruction of the morning of a lady bather, and frankness compels me to confess that it is unnecessary, for she went through exactly the same process, with one exception, that if she was hardy enough to want a cold bath she had to take it in the ladies' dressing-room itself. The young bloods of the town were encouraged to stage-door intrigues by the fact that the entrance to the men's private baths was on the west side, quite close to one of the women's entrances. Such was the form and usage of the Roman bath, which served as club, stock exchange, theatre, and sports ground to the people. So pleasant a way of passing one's day was enormously appreciated, and must have killed time in a thoroughly agreeable manner if one had no work to do. Thus the Emperor Commodus used to take a bath eight times a day, and probably echoed the popular saying :

> Balnea, vina, Venus corrumpunt corpora nostra
> Sed vitam faciunt. [1]

and some sybarite put up an inscription, which has come down to us, summing up his philosophy of life, rather

[1] " Baths, wine, and love corrupt our feeble bodies,
But make our life."

ungrammatically, in the words, "Venari, lavari, ludere, ridere hoc est vivere." [1]

I have already suggested that the choice of Rome as a site was partly due to the fact that it is the first place on coming down from the Alban Hills, where water is found in any quantity. The Forum in particular was originally a swampy meadow, which must have served the primitive settlers on the Palatine as a defence against surprise attacks from hostile neighbours on the other hills, as pasture for their cattle, and as the source of their water supply. The memory of the value of these local springs was later preserved in the festival of the Fontanalia, or Fountains, held on October 13th, when the people cast wreaths into the springs and crowned the wells. The majority of the local waters were used by Tarquin the Elder for flushing the great drains with which he equipped the city, and this accounts for most of the waters of Rome being hidden.

But others are still visible, or at least audible. In the Forum itself the most ancient and yet perennially youthful thing among that mass of historic rubble is the fountain of Juturna, just beyond the temple of Castor and Pollux, where the great twin brethren watered their horses on arriving to announce the victory of Lake Regilius. It is a charming spot, with the green of the grass framing the white of its marbles, and it almost seems as if the Nymph had successfully retained some touches of feminine delicateness and beauty in the place holy to her. Another local spring which has reverted to its ancient rusticity is that of the Cammenæ, or Muses, one of whom—Egeria—was the familiar of King Numa. She had clandestine meetings with him in the grove near where a shapeless mass of brickwork in the middle of an orchard marks the site of the Porta Capena, opposite the Baths of Caracalla. Here was also, according to Ovid, a spring of Mercury, whose water was holy, and used to sanctify any object which was sold.

Of a more sombre character are two other springs which survive from ancient times. The Tullianum shows in the

[1] "Living consists of hunting, bathing, playing, laughing."

gloomy Mamertine prison, in the cells where formerly were confined prisoners under sentence of death. Many State captives must have drunk of it in their last hours, including, perhaps, St. Peter himself; indeed, tradition says that St. Peter caused the spring miraculously to well forth, and used the water to baptize his jailers. Its earlier history was happier, for it was the first public fountain of Rome and the precursor of all those which are to-day such a feature of the city. The other spring is eerie rather than gloomy. You can hear its waters talking away down below the lowest crypt of San Clemente, and the ghostly mutter gives the horrid impression of something living stirring in a grave. No one knows whence these waters come or how they run, but by a recently constructed channel they are run off into the Cloaca Maxima, and so come to a prosaic and practical ending for all their mystery. And there they join those of another spring, the last and most romantic of the local sources, sacred to the naiads of Ausonia, from whose stream Tarpeia the traitoress drew water and so came to meet her Sabine lover; for it ran down from the Quirinal, where the besieging army had its camp, and so was used by both sides. But the stream and spring retained no memory of the terrible end of Tarpeia, and were associated only with lovers' meetings in later times.

I have left to the last the father of all Roman waters, Tiber himself. Of the four rivers which Cicero mentions as having been the boundaries of the primitive Roman State only Tiber can be identified, and he needs neither search nor introduction. How intimately interwoven he is with the existence of Rome is proved by that title of high honour which has descended from the Republic to the Popes. It is no symbolism that the latter have called themselves in all times by the style of "Pontifex Maximus," the "Chief Bridge Builder." In its lay significance this appellation dates from the time when the preservation of the Pons Sublicius in peace, and its destruction when the city was attacked, was the most vital concern of the State. In its religious significance it has always been held by the chief priest of Pagan,

as of Christian Rome, and recalls the days when the said priest propitiated Tiber annually with sacrifices, even of human beings.

He who has tried to shoot the Ponte Milvio against the current, or who has watched the yellow waves banking themselves against the island, and tearing at the arches of the Ponte Sisto, will realize that the desire to placate the river did not arise out of sheer superstition. On the wall of the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, about twelve feet from the ground, a tablet is let in which recalls how, in 1560, that level was reached by his flood, and how the whole city was on the point of destruction, "nisi huic celerem Virgo tulisset opem" ("had not the Virgin brought her speedy succour"). Other tablets show how, on three other occasions, of which two were in the same century, the tide has lapped against the walls. A ship in full sail upon some conventional waves tops the main inscription, lending to the record a touch of art and exaggeration; for though one would like to think that the fierce waters, as they swirled through the unsavoury streets, were ridden by some tall caravel, yet navigation in those streets, even in a cab, is sufficiently difficult to force us to rule out a ship altogether.

To-day the protective duties of the Virgin have been taken over by high stone-faced embankments. But as one gazes down upon the racing stream one feels that Tiber is still an ugly and ferocious character, and one is inclined to be thankful that one's house is not situated in Ripa or Trastevere. I may be unduly bitter because he has often made a fool of me. In the early days of my sojourn in Rome I frequently had to go to the Palazzo Farnese, which I knew to be backed by the Tiber. It was my ambition—an apparently modest one—to walk back through the city to the Via Veneto, where I then lived; and I therefore struck straight inland, so to say, from the Palazzo. After ten minutes' hard walking I came out of a narrow street plump upon the river, and apparently on the wrong side of it. I cast back, and came to the Palazzo Farnese again. Starting off afresh, slightly less confidently, I succeeded in avoiding that confounded river for fifteen

minutes, but finally there he was, barring the way again. There was no cab, and to beg my way I was ashamed; so that I was reduced to the compromising expedient of following a lady, whose expensive exterior seemed to denote that she was going to a fashionable quarter, and fortunately the deduction proved accurate. This happened five or six times—not the following of stray females, of course, but the losing my way. It was not due to madness or hallucination, but simply to the fact that Tiber takes a terrific bend round the Campo Marzio district, and every time I had failed to strike the neck of the loop.

It may be thought that Tiber has compensated his people for treating them thus rudely by effectively defending them in the hour of danger; but, as a matter of fact, he has served only to give a false sense of security. Against a succession of invaders the bulwark of Rome has not been the Tiber, but the Janiculum. After the fall of this ridge, the enemy has swept unchecked over the bridges of the river, which have felt the feet of the wild masses of Brennus' Gauls, the stately procession of Charlemagne's Frankish chivalry, and the drunken rabble of Bourbon's army—of all, in short, who have come to honour or to sack the great city. To-day this proud stream is, like the Thames at Westminster, reduced to the dimensions of a muddy ditch. The bather must go upstream above the junction of the polluting waters of the Aniene if he desires not to emerge dirtier than he went in. The Romans say that if you take a cup of his water and allow the sediment therein to settle the remaining liquid is pure and wholesome, but I have never been adventurous enough to risk it after a glance at his repulsive appearance. Over his stream passes the shrieking horror of the Roman trams. Between his escarpments of stone and his banks of viscous mud darts an occasional skiff propelled by an aristocrat in search of sunburn or exercise—the only living thing upon his waters; and instead of prayers and honourable sacrifice he receives refuse and dead dogs, which he rolls contemptuously down to the dead port of Ostia and the ugliest beach in Christendom. So passes the glory of Father Tiber.

CHAPTER IV

ROMAN GAMES

IN the Via dell' Abbondanza at Pompeii, on the right-hand side as one goes towards the cinder wall which marks the present limit of the excavations, are the ruins of a school. The pupils have scratched on the walls, as is the habit of children in all ages and nations, the thoughts uppermost in their minds when they ought to have been attending to their lessons. Among these *graphiti* is one which expresses the naïve delight of the author at the prospect of going to the amphitheatre. Another inscription on the other side of the street is in the form of a poster announcing the gladiatorial fight to be offered to the people by the ædile Pansa, and it is possibly of this show that the school-child was dreaming. In those days games were games indeed, and combined all the emotions excited to-day by a visit to the Zoo and the witnessing of an execution.

The sport of gladiatorial fighting was reduced to an organized science, bearing a sinister kinship to modern professional football; that is to say, the gladiators were divided into lanistæ, or teams, with manager, trainers, and partisans, who worked up a prodigious amount of enthusiasm over a contest between, let us say, Trastevere Hotspur and Quirinal United. Transfer fees were not unknown, and bets were legion. Another good analogy is afforded by the Ring in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries; for individual gladiators had their patrons among the Augustales, just as Mendoza or the Gasman were backed and flattered by celebrated Corinthians. They were also similarly pampered by fashionable ladies. The infamous Messalina, for example, the first wife of the Emperor Claudius, had her favourite lanista, whose members were the companions of her debaucheries and whom she doubtless used for the same purposes

as later the mediaeval ladies employed members of the universally respected profession of assassin.

How strong a hold these games had upon the affections of the people is, perhaps, best shown by the fact that two hundred and seventy-four years after the birth of Christ the Emperor Aurelian could still exhibit sixteen hundred gladiators in the arena on the occasion of his triumph over Zenobia. Two hundred and fifty years later the throne of Justinian was seriously shaken by the fights between the two factions of the "Blues" and the "Greens," into which the partisans of the rival stables furnishing materials for the chariot races were divided. By the time of the great Theososius (379–93) the actual shedding of human blood in the amphitheatre was prohibited, at least in the Eastern Empire; but the people of Thessalonica could murder their imperial governor for the sole reason that he had imprisoned a favourite charioteer; and though the circus had replaced the arena, it is certain that far more blood was shed in the quarrels of the audience of the less brutal sport than was ever demanded of the actors in the more cruel. In the West gladiatorial combats continued up to the year 402, and were only then prohibited by the self-sacrifice of a monk, who threw himself into the arena to separate the combatants. The savage people could not endure this interruption of their sport, and the unhappy monk was torn to pieces. But the spectacle was too much even for the slothful and lethargic Honorius, who roused himself sufficiently to issue an edict forbidding the battles of gladiators in future.

Standing in the middle of the Colosseum, even as it is to-day, one can reconstruct the scene on one of the great feast days, when the eighty entrances, whose numbers are still legible, had admitted their eighty-seven thousand spectators and the games were about to begin. The floor of the arena was a dozen feet lower than it is to-day, for the building was used by the Frangipani as a fortress, and the remains of their stronghold have raised the floor level. The great circuit of the upper tiers was, of course, complete, and the iron or bronze crotchets which clamped the blocks together were in place; but beyond

these differences the material aspect of the great theatre was much the same.

Let us choose a day in the year A.D. 191, when Commodus reigned in the stead of his father Marcus Aurelius, and when under the stimulus of imperial patronage the whole world was ransacked to increase the glory of the games. Up in the third gallery swarms the mass of the common people—slaves, freedmen, and beggars—a patchwork of bright colours and fluttering rags, emitting the excited hum of a great crowd, which phonetically may be transcribed as " Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb." Below, in the second gallery, throng the sober ranks of the richer commoners, with their wives and elder children, the more wealthy or respectable established on the shady side, the poorer or less reputable on the sunny. In the first gallery, or dress circle, so to say, are the senators and nobility—a range of pure white with touches of gold. In the front row tribunes below vast wealth is honoured in the persons of the equites, sitting on either side of the central box reserved for the six vestal virgins, whose is the final word of life or death in the bloody ceremonies. Below them again, each in his niche, stand the Prætorian Guards in gilded armour ; and up and down the passageways pass the vendors of sweetmeats, programmes, and perfumes. There is but one vacant spot, over the main entrance from the Palatine, upon which all eyes are fixed.

Suddenly a louder hum rises from the people, a great stir as the masses rise to their feet, and into the imperial box comes a tall, well-built young man, clothed in a long robe of purple, and carrying a stick of ivory. His wild, rolling eye is bright with excitement, and his cheeks flushed with anticipatory pleasure. Behind him strolls a band of young exquisites, with a carefully cultivated air of supercilious boredom. They keep a watchful eye, however, upon the young man in purple, and should he turn to speak to one of them, the boredom is transformed in a twinkling into servility. Their dress is pure white, trimmed with gold and purple, as befits augustales, companions of the emperor, for the young man in purple is Commodus himself. With them are a number

of women of every rank and of every type, whom the occasional favours of the emperor have elevated or reduced to the same level. The ladies in the audience are quick to note that the Greek *coiffure*—hair looped back in two waves over the head, and fastened in a loose knot on the nape—has been abandoned in favour of a tower of curls and an elaborate fringe, studded here and there with jewels; and in the intervals of describing to each other the depravity of these creatures, they make a mental resolve to try the new fashion on the morrow. A few slaves, carrying bows, arrows, darts, javelins, and refreshments, bring up the rear, and as the company take their places on the raised dais, come forward and squat on the ground near the emperor. A maniple of prætorians march round to the front of the dais and form a shining hedge of steel and gold.

The emperor smiles graciously at the applauding crowd until his ear catches the meaning of certain discordant yells from the top tier; for the Roman mob, in the safety and obscurity of numbers, never hesitated to criticize their master. And so from a thousand throats come cries of "What price corn to-day?" "Why do the Baths lack oil?" "Who pinched the Ostia convoy?" And even a few, more daring than the rest, bent the ominous resentment of the populace against the emperor's minister: "Cleander!" "Give us Cleander!" "Death to Cleander!" The fat Phrygian cowers and grimaces as the emperor's smile changes to a frown, and he leans hastily forward to whisper in his master's ear. A sign from the latter, and a band of nearly naked sailors run out across the arena and up the other side. They haul out a huge awning which will protect the people from the sun and cool their bodies and their tempers.

A herald blows a blast upon a silver trumpet, and in the comparative silence thus produced announces in stentorian tones that "the Divine Commodus, Imperator, Consul for the tenth time, possessed of the Tribunician power, Pontifex Maximus, son of the Divine Marcus, etc., etc.," offers these games to the people of Rome to celebrate the twenty-ninth anniversary of his auspicious life. In a better silence still

he details the magnificent nature of the entertainment, the number of animals and criminals to be displayed, the names of the famous gladiators who are to appear, and finally announces that on this day the emperor himself, the Roman Hercules, will condescend to display his skill and courage in the arena. A tumult of applause breaks out, even the senators, under the eye of a possible informer, concealing with feverish enthusiasm the secret shame of their hearts.

The games open with wrestling, running, and boxing matches, which the great crowd watch with interest but without excitement, for they have come for blood, not sport. At last the athletes disappear, the sand is raked afresh, and the gratings on the south side at the arena level creak open. A small band of white-clad, unkempt figures, men and women, is thrust out into the blazing sunlight, and driven into the centre by slaves with whips. The slaves disappear. Again the gratings creak open and a hundred tawny, slinking forms emerge, scenting the air with huge muzzles, and switching their lean flanks with their tails. The white group in the centre sinks to its knees, and a quavering chant rises from it. The great beasts, excited by the clamour and by their hunger, creep stealthily forward. There is a flurry, a shriek or two, a sound of roaring and worrying, and it is over. The emperor fidgets in his seat, and turns to take his bow from a slave. "Who were they?" he asks perfunctorily. "Christians, master," replies the slave, straining to bend the bow.[1]

All afternoon and long into the evening the blood flows, animal and human. The emperor unwittingly avenges the martyrs by slaying the hundred lions with a hundred arrows. A troop of ostriches, racing round in ungainly flight, fall beneath his shafts. A giraffe, whose appearance for the first time in Rome excites a gasp of wonder and interest, is smitten in mid-career by the imperial javelin, and falls kicking in its death-throes beneath the dais. From time to time scavengers run out, haul in the bodies, and sprinkle fresh sand over the bloodstains. And last of all comes the cream

[1] There are, in point of fact, no records of Commodus having displayed Christians in the arena. But such a scene was common under Domitian or Diocletian.

of the show, a body of a hundred men, half in full armour with short sword, shield, and visored helmet; the other half naked, and carrying only net and trident, marches across the arena to the imperial box. They halt, and, raising their right hands, salute him with a deep-throated shout, "Ave Cæsar Imperator, Morituri te salutant."

They take post, armoured men (secutores) against net men (retiarii), and the noise of battle rolls upwards to the yelling people. See, on the right of the line, the famous secutor Paulus has eluded the cast of Nymphidius's net, and disabled him by a blow on the leg. He stands over his fallen adversary, sword high in air, turning first to the people and then to the emperor. Luckily for Nymphidius, all the bets had been against him. The people are not vengeful, and rather pleased with him for being beaten. The vestals take their cue from the forest of arms with upturned thumbs, and give him life in the sign of mercy. He hobbles out of the ring leaning on the arm of his conqueror. Far otherwise is it in that other fight on the left. There the favourite secutor, Narses, has slipped in a pool of blood when pointing a fierce thrust at his opponent. In a moment the net is over him, he trips in its folds and falls, and the great trident is on his heart. No mercy for him. The emperor himself had backed him. Down go the thumbs, the trident is thrust home, and a grisly figure stalks out from the side to dispatch the last flicker of life and drag the body with a hook in to the mortuary. It leaves a bloody furrow in the sand, and soon the furrow is not alone.

So end the games, and the people swarm out through the vomitoria to talk over the day's sport, to settle up their books, and to comfort themselves for their losses and the dullness of the domestic hearth with the thought that they are at least alive and not like those other men. Down the dark streets comes a bawling, riotous mob of men, a huge drunken figure with a bandaged shoulder at their head. It is Lysimmachus, one of the victors, being fêted by his backers. And away in the palace on the Palatine, the emperor lifts his head from Marcia's knees to slobber over a last cup in

honour of his own prowess, and to order that his exploits of that day shall be engraved on the public annals.

The Romans have long passed the days when they roared over the dead and dying in the Colosseum, and " the games " no longer signify ceremonies of which Death is the acknowledged master. But there are still traces of the old spirit, and there is one game where the rivalry is so intense and the victory so fiercely disputed that the law has had to step in to forbid it in order to prevent an effusion of blood. It is played still, however, by cabmen down side streets, and by children at street corners, where a double line of retreat is open on the approach of the police. It is known as " Morra," and has the great recommendation of needing no apparatus except the human arm and hand. The players stand opposite each other, each with the right hand tightly clenched, the elbow slightly bent in the attitude of boxers. Both raise and lower their right hands once, twice, thrice, in the gesture of a politician thumping the box. At the third time of asking the arm and hand are flung outwards, and any number of fingers from zero to five are released. Simultaneously both players cry out a number, any number up to ten, which each hopes will be the total of fingers exposed both by himself and his opponent. " Ten " is " morra," and it is a proof of the antiquity of the game that nobody knows why. The player who guesses the correct number of fingers scores " one," and marks it by elevating a finger of the left hand. He who first (legitimately) succeeds in raising all the fingers of the left hand wins ; or, in other words, five is game and set, and the match can begin over again. It is played at an incredible speed, in order to camouflage the fact of the game under the appearance of a friendly talk—a very good plan in a country where people talk so largely with their hands. Some players become extremely expert, and acquire an uncanny skill and intuition in guessing how many fingers their opponent is going to expose. The beginner generally makes a fool of himself by calling out, in the excitement of the moment, a number less than the number of fingers he has himself exposed. The expert says that it is best to gaze straight into the eyes

of one's opponent, for there is generally a noticeable change of expression when he is about to show a large number of fingers.

The opportunities for cheating are obviously enormous, and are fully exploited in the heat of battle. Hence come the casualties, for accusations are fiercely resented, especially when true. It is particularly difficult, for example, to show three fingers. The little finger persists in coming half out with the other three, and the player can make out an equally good case for having intended to show three or four, whichever suits him best. Therefore daggers and revolvers come out as well as fingers, and again therefore, the law has stepped in and forbidden the game absolutely. Under this ban it drags out a failing existence here in Italy, but it would be a public service to introduce it into less excitable climes. Think of the impetus to social intercourse if, every morning on the Tubes and District Railway, the worthy gentlemen who go to the city, instead of ensconcing themselves behind the morning paper, made it a point of honour to engage in a game of "morra" with their vis-à-vis. The very architecture of the underground rolling stock, with its rows of parallel benches, seems to have envisaged such a development. It is a noble dream, and I am certain that its realization would produce a touch of humanity even in international finance.

So deeply implanted is the love of gambling in the Italian race that it has been surprising that the abolition of the casinos by the Fascista Government has not occasioned more resentment. The explanation is that the casino catered for only a comparatively small class, apart from the foreign visitors, and that for the rest of the population a paternal State offers ample satisfaction of their gambling instincts once a week. There are few who do not play, or who have not played in the lottery, for the principle of the authorities is "any contribution, however small, thankfully received," and so anybody who can rake together a couple of lire before midday on Saturday is eligible for a flutter. In every city, and in every fair-sized village, there are special Bance di Lotto, where the money is taken in and the tickets handed

out. The drawings take place every week in the nine principal cities of Italy, and the winning numbers are at once posted up outside these banks and published in the earliest edition of the newspapers.

The Lotto is fairly conducted, and in essence very simple. Five numbers under 91 may be selected, or any permutation or combination of five numbers, and the object is to select correctly the numbers which are drawn. It is permissible to bet on a number of combinations, each being quoted at different odds. Thus the gambler may select two only or three only, or four only—any two, or any three, or any four under 91. To bet on two only is known as "backing the Ambo," and a favourite combination is 31 and 47. They both turned up in Palermo last week, and the total winnings of the lucky Sicilians totalled over a million lire. Three numbers constitute a Terno, and four a Quarterno; if taken in sequence they are known as a terno and quarterno secco respectively. The last is the most ambitious bet that can be made, and the odds against it are officially given at 600,000 to 1. These odds may sound enormous, but an expert in the law of probabilities will confirm my suspicion that they are too low. I have never heard of anyone winning on a quarterno secco, and I know that the State, on an average, makes a profit of about one million sterling per annum on the Lotto. Hope, however, springs eternal, and a number of usages have arisen in connexion with the betting, which the superstitious gambler must follow to have any chance of success in his own estimation and that of his friends.

Every incident in life has its corresponding number. There are numbers for joy, sorrow, birth, death, marriage—the whole gamut, in short, of human emotions and experiences; and there is a special book published, called "Smorfia," which gives the proper connotation for every number. Thus, if you are knocked down by a tram, you may (if still alive) resolve on the way to hospital to back the accident number. If you are dead your friends back it, or the death, or the inheritance, or the delight number, according to the feelings aroused in them by the event. It is reported that after

a great shipping disaster outside Genoa the whole population backed the calamity numbers, which actually turned up, at a cost to the State of over seven million lire. Each week after the drawings you may see the disappointed turning away, a man frantically upbraiding his wife because, although the hen had laid an egg with a double yoke she had insisted upon his backing the illness instead of the prodigy numbers, on the absurd pretext that she had herself had a cold. The practice of playing in the Lotto is not confined to the poor. I know of one member of the nobility who regularly parts with ten lire per week on a quarterno secco, and who once missed millions by a single number. Therefore, whatever the Puritans may say, the lottery is a national institution, and will survive as long as men have the right and the pleasure of spending their money according to their own sweet will.

Among card games bridge holds pride of place, although the highest gambling is, or was until the terrible scandal of 1923 in one of the smart clubs of Rome put a check upon it, reserved for poker and écarté. But bridge in Italy is not the sober pastime to which we are accustomed in England. It is a vocal comedy or tragedy whose book of words is every known variety of pæan or objurgation. Every hand is played over again simultaneously, not only by the four players but by the circle of friends with which the tables are each and all surrounded ; and only by a conscious effort of mental abstraction is it possible to play at all. Never shall I forget the face of a stranger whose knowledge of Italian was *nil*, and of French limited to the words *oui* and *non*, who had the misfortune to revoke when playing with three Italians. The Italian gentleman is inferior to none in perfect courtesy to a guest, but he considers expostulation within the limits of good manners. The stranger's partner began, therefore, to lay his error before him in fluent Italian, his arms going like windmills, and his voice gradually rising as he perceived he was not making himself understood. The stranger's expression, at first puzzled, became alarmed. His opponents, observing his embarrassment, came to the rescue, the one in metallic, machine-gun French, the other in execrable English.

The three voices in the three languages rose together and flooded round the stranger's whirling head. But the gentleman speaking in French, in the interval of changing a belt, so to say, had leisure to remark that the gentleman speaking in Italian had made a mistake in his exposé of the case. He turned to him in order to set that matter, at least, right. The Italian speaker hotly rebutted his contention ; the English speaker joined in, and the stranger, to his unutterable relief, found himself deserted while gouts of Italian spouted from and between the other three.

A game does not take so long as might be expected, because when the Italian does play a hand he plays it at incredible speed ; and it must not be thought from the above description of an incident that the Italian form of bridge is unpleasant. On the contrary, it possesses a delightful intimacy and freedom which is unknown in the British version of the game ; and if the Italian thinks you play badly, he is nearly always careful to retire out of earshot in order to confide his opinion to the ceiling or a mutual friend. This remark does not apply to the ladies. The less fashionable play a game known as *tre sette*, which is a kind of whist, with occasional descents to picquet. But the excellent French game of *manille* does not seem to have penetrated.

So much for cards and the less energetic forms of sport. But the Italians by no means neglect the more manly. Association football has caught on tremendously since the war, and I suspect that the widespread diffusion of the game is one of the most durable monuments which the army have left behind them in the countries of their war sojourn. In Spain, however, the devotion is even more absolute, and this is perhaps because the Spaniards have at last arrived at the *mañana* of the Peninsular War. In Italy, at least, there can be no doubt that the game is a war fruit. Most of the great cities now run a team, and there is a national side which did well in the recent Olympic Games. It covered itself with glory in defeating a so-called English side at Rome in the spring of 1924. On all the waste spaces of the city eager youngsters may be seen at all hours of the day and in all

costumes, from a greatcoat to a clerical soutane, chasing madly after something which has once been a ball, and, as usual, there is almost more talking than kicking, but plenty of really keen spirit; for the Italian has always had considerable talent for athletics. The nation produces fine runners, of whom the best known in England is probably Dorando, who won the first Marathon, but was disqualified; and a number of young men who indulge solemnly in that most unintelligible of all professions—long distance bicycle riding. Boxing, too, is most popular, and an evening of bouts at the Adriano, behind the Ministry of Justice (which looks as if a boxer erected it), is a sure draw.

The more amateur sports are also highly patronized. At tennis the Italians have not produced a player of the highest class since the war, but there are a great number of very good second-raters; and it should be remembered that an Italian is terribly handicapped when he comes to play on grass, because all the courts in his country are of the hard variety. Nor does a country in which rain is a rarity and the visibility always perfect fit him for one where the ground is rarely more solid than a quagmire and the atmosphere charged with every form of obstruction from fog to snow. Therefore, as a nation of tennis players they may be considered as attaining a general high level. I confess that my judgment may be biased, for if I have met few Italians who could beat Tilden I have met none at all who could lose to myself.

The next Italian game is golf. That may sound like blasphemy to a Scotchman, but it is nevertheless a fact that golf is played in Italy, and played seriously. There is a course near Lake Maggiore, whither resort the Milanese, and which, being in the foothills, is playable only in the summer. At Rome golf is a winter game, for climatic reasons also; but from November to April it is in full swing, and where once the Appian Way rang to the shouts of the returning Legions, thin voices call for the niblick and the noise of the bunkered is heard in the land. The rolling cadence of the Latin idiom is replaced by disparaging grunts in the dialect of Musselburgh as a cynical professional watches the earnest of all

nations plough the earth of the Campagna. Golf at Rome is chiefly the diversion of the foreign colonies and the considerable number of British-educated Italians. There are methodical Americans, frantic Frenchmen, sombre Spaniards, earnest Englishmen, and even a Japanese who attacks the ball with the gallantry of a Samurai and the imperturbable face of a Buddha. There were also Russians before the Bolsheviks eradicated from that nation all possibility of amusement, except that caused by their less venomous antics.

But there are also many pure Italians, and the whole of the setting is national, from the comfortable matron who supplies an excellent lunch of spaghetti, eggs, cheese, and wine under a sweet-scented pergola, to the acolytes of the Musselburgh professional. These acolytes are a crowd of small boys, divided into first- and second-class caddies. The only differences are that the first-class chatter melodiously and the second shrilly when you are in the middle of your stroke, and that the first run more swiftly than the second to the place where your ball has disappeared into the river. Neither by any chance ever finds it ; but one cannot expect too much of persons whose reward is something under a shilling a round. It is worth more than that to hear your boy vent his English with " Outaboundshell," accompanied by the cheeriest of grins as your opponent's ball ducks over the boundary fence.

This flippancy is not intended to mask any dreadful secret as to the quality of the course. It is a real test of the game, and he is a proud man who can circumvent bogey. Nor is it a show-room for mannequins of *le sport*, as are so many continental courses. The jazz jersey and the high-heeled shoe are looked upon with puritanical disfavour, and though many of the players might feel inclined to echo M. Briand's dictum that " golf would be an easy game but for the hesitation which seizes one as the stick descends," they are all triers. The land is the land of Aqua Santa, the Holy Water, which runs athwart it in the Marana brook and forms the chief hazard, so that many to this day are found to rise up and call it blessed. The nymph of this stream is a greedy and unkindly

damsel; and the sacrifice to her of several tons of rubber during the season appears only to make her greedy for more. Yet her dress is lovely—clear, swift water fringed with nodding rushes below banks lush with the emerald green of grass and the yellow and white of buttercups and daisies.

Golf, of course, is too serious for sentiment, but on the Rome links even the most devout cannot rage long over a topped mashie. For, if lifting the head causes the ball to pursue a base and ignoble course, it also reveals a grand and noble panorama. On the left the painted wine-carts rattle along the *pavé* of the Via Appia Nuova, and, beyond, the broken arches of the Aqua Claudia lead the eye up to the swell of the green and purple Alban Hills, framing the white jewel of Frascati. Farther still to the left hangs in the sky the fainter shadow of the Sabine Mountains, amethyst below and silver above where the sun strikes upon their last snows. To the right the slope rises to the Via Appia Antica and the round mass of Cecilia Metella's tomb. Behind lies the club house, set in a group of magnificent pines; and lastly at one's feet is the ostensible reason of one's presence—the white ball nestling in a patch of blue gentians. The brassey is produced with a sigh that the summer cometh when no grass can grow, when clubs will be tucked away until November, and the lizards will keep the pastures where the golfer gloried and smote deep. I cannot refrain from adding that all Italians do not appreciate the ritual of golf. One of the greens lies near the road, and the flag thereon was of the proper red. Suspecting, no doubt, that it marked the site of some Socialist holy ground, the local Fascisti organized a night-attack. The offending morsel was ravished and removed for cremation on the high road. And this is why a flag of virginal whiteness, token of surrender and humility, marks the sixteenth hole. When Signor Mussolini was told of this incident he laughed, and said that the faithful were very vigilant.

After writing of this sport of prime ministers it is almost sacrilegious to devote a few lines to the sport of mere kings. But, in truth, it is in the riding of horses that the Italians excel. There is even a pack of hounds which may be followed

HOUNDS PASSING THE AQUEDUCT OF CLAUDIUS IN THE CAMPAGNA ROMANA

on a hired, or, preferably, a borrowed, steed; and it is a whimsical sight to see the hunt passing under the arches of an aqueduct. The real forte of the Italians is, however, show jumping, to which they are devoted; and a great day is that on which the contests are held in the hippodrome of the Villa Borghese. It is rather curious that the Italians should be such good horsemen, for the Roman cavalry was never of the quality of the infantry, and the famous *condottieri* of the Middle Ages were invariably, so far as I can ascertain, foot soldiers. There is one recorded incident, however, where the Italian chivalry engaged in a more dangerous sport than obstacle races or jumping competitions. In the year 1332, on the third of September, the Colosseum was redecorated and used for a bull-fight, in which the youth of the noblest houses of Italy encountered on horseback, and armed only with a spear, their savage adversaries in the arena. The human combatants had the worst of it, and suffered a loss of eighteen killed and nine wounded. There are still bull-fights in Rome, but they are held out at Parioli in the bicycle Stadium; the performers are Spaniards, and the bulls bear sometimes a painful resemblance to the females of their race. Just beyond the Stadium is a racecourse where meetings are held every Sunday during the season; but the Romans are not passionate race-goers, and Parioli is a poor successor to the Circus Maximus.

The mention of horse-racing in Rome, indeed, calls up a picture, not of the modern flat race or steeplechase, but of the chariot races of classical times. "Sunt quos curriculo pulverem Olympicum collegisse juvat"—the courtliest of the court poets of the Augustan age picks out the favourite amusement of the time to begin his series of cameo sketches of polite society. And chariot-racing was popular not only in the days of Horace, but from the very earliest times of the Roman State. Livy, in one of his books which really do exist, says that it was in the reign of Tarquinius Priscus that the ground between the Palatine and the Aventine, the Valle Murcia, was first mapped out "for a Circus, which is now called Maximus."

The Circus Maximus was thus the earliest place of public amusement in Rome and dates from between 616 and 578 B.C. Everybody has heard of it, but nobody has seen it, because to-day it is covered by twelve feet of earth, by the buildings and tanks of a gas company, and by the old Israelitish cemetery.[1] But in the heyday of its glory it was capable of seating four hundred thousand spectators, at first on the grassy slopes, like the crowd at Epsom on Derby Day, and later on benches of marble and travertine, over which towered the great imperial box—the "Pulvinar ad Circum Maximum" erected by Augustus on the Palatine. The central hippodrome, oval in shape, was delimited by a long, low *spina* or island in the centre, its sides decorated with bas-reliefs, and its summit planted with palm trees and adorned with monuments. On it were placed the seats of the mighty, and two ponderous obelisks, which were later transferred to the Piazza del Popolo and the Piazza of St. John in the Lateran, where they may be seen to this day. The fragile four-horsed chariots tore round this island in fierce competition, with a thunder of hoofs and a jangle of harness, and it was perhaps after witnessing some such race that Vergil, with the rhythm of their passage still in his ears, wrote his famous line:

Quadraputente putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.

The difficult part of the sport was to round the *meta*, the three columns marking the end of the *spina*, and the victor was he who succeeded in shaving it most closely without overturning. The chariots entered by the Gate of Pomp in the east and went out by the gate of Triumph in the west, in the panoply of a noble and skilful sport whose like has not been witnessed from the time of Theodoric until the long line of British tanks advanced through the morning mists at Cambrai.

There are other games of a purely Roman or Italian character, but they are confined to the country, and will be described in a later chapter. The last which falls to be dealt

[1] The Fascista Government propose to excavate the Circus Maximus as a memorial of their tenure of power. The conception is a noble one—a good deal nobler than the regime itself.

with in this can perhaps hardly be called a game, but is so great a feature of Roman life that it cannot be omitted. And it is a game if taken in the right spirit—the spirit, let us say, of soldiers in the great war. This newer struggle for existence is against enemies smaller, more insidious, and quite as ruthless as the ex-Kaiser's legions. Insect life in Rome is, not to put too fine a point upon it, plentiful and powerful. There is, first of all, the Air Force, led by those scouting planes, the flies. Rome solves in part the famous problem of where those animals go in the winter time, for though silent here during the short months from November to March, they are very much here during the other seven. The experts say that the windows should be closed between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., and that then the flies will not enter. This is only a half truth, for they do not enter—they pour in ; and I will give an unsolicited testimonial to " The Times " newspaper that, as a destroyer of flies, it is unsurpassed if folded flat and applied with a slight drawing motion of the hand.

After all, however, flies are tolerable in that they do not always bite ; and lest the Roman should be lonely in the dark hours the mosquitoes, and another dread insect, the papadoci, come to keep his company. The mosquito is the same all the world over, and there is no man who has not heard with a sinking heart the sharp trill of his wings in the small hours. In Italian he is known by the lovely name of " zanzara," and is, appropriately enough, of the feminine gender. But the papadoci are a native Italian product. They are small, silent flies of a pale-green colour, tiny enough to penetrate any net, and equipped with a most poisonous bite. They have but one weakness from their point of view, and that is greed. This induces them to bury their heads for one second in the flesh of their victim, which second is full of an agonizing prick. This is often their undoing ; but in dying they bite deep, and their funeral mound is large and lasting. The only way to keep them at bay is to shut all windows whenever a light is on, and to stifle oneself by burning some noxious preparation of sulphur in the room. Then the light can be

turned out, and the gasping inmate fumbles his way to the window, which he opens—to receive, probably, a contingent of papadoci who have been waiting outside until he has finished his little game.

Finally there is the infantry of the hostile army—the fleas. There is much dust in Rome, the visitor may think, during the summer months. He is mistaken. The dust is merely sprinkled by the municipality over a thick layer of fleas; nor will he be long in finding this out for himself.

CHAPTER V

ROMAN PRIESTS

HERE, in the central shrine of the Church of Rome, we are surrounded on all sides by dead and living witnesses to her faith. No street is without its church, and in every lane, however humble, may be seen at any hour of the day or night, a sprinkling of priests among the passers-by. The former commemorate every conceivable saint or saintess, and every variety of miracle; the latter represent the nations among whom the Roman faith can number disciples—that is to say, every nation upon earth. In their chrysalis stage the priests of the various nationalities may be distinguished by the uniforms which they wear. The broad-brimmed beaver hat and the soutane are common to all, but the decoration of the latter differs in colour. These students of national Catholic colleges walk the streets apparently all day long, in that formation known as the "crocodile," chattering, laughing, whispering, reading. One passes a file in vivid scarlet, and catches a word or two of German; in black with blue facings, and the aquiline asceticism of the faces tells one they are Spaniards even before one hears the sibilant hiss of their talk. Those in plain black are French, and in black and magenta British. Even the East is represented by Assamese and the South American continent by Brazilians and Argentines. One does not know whether to be more amazed at this living evidence of the widespread appeal of the Roman Church or saddened at the thought of so many fresh young creatures condemned (if so they choose, after their years of preparation) to a life void of the joys of domesticity.

But these are not all who wear the livery of Rome. There are village *curés* of all shapes and sizes, parish priests, officiants of the city churches, friars in the white of St. Dominic or the

brown of St. Francis, with bare, sandalled feet. And on great days appears the hierarchy of the Church, monsignori, bishops, and cardinals in all the splendour of crimson, and the Pope himself in white and gold borne through St. Peter's in his chair with finger upraised to bless the applauding people. To the tourist he is an interesting anomaly, but to thousands in that great Chruch he is the Vicar of Christ, the father and servant of the servants of Christ, in daily and hourly communion with the Holy Ghost. And because he represents a system which has endured nearly two thousand years, because he is the head on earth of a faith which still plays so immense a part in the life of Rome and of Italy, I must give a page or two to a description of that system and faith incarnate in this stout, middle-aged gentleman, with the kindly face beaming behind spectacles and beneath the marvellous mitre of gold and jewels.

The fundamental claim of the Papacy is embodied in the legend that runs round the Lantern of St. Peter's: "TU ES PETRUS, ET SUPER HANC PETRAM AEDIFICABO ECCLESIAM MEAM."[1] St. Peter is therefore the founder and head of the Church, and because he was the first Bishop of Rome (or, at least, he is known to have done a great deal of missionary work and to have baptized many persons in the City), the Bishop of Rome is the head of the Christian Church.[2] It is perhaps, worth noting that when his adversaries call the Pope, in depreciation of his world claims, "the Bishop of Rome," they are giving him the very title upon which all those claims are founded. Pope (= *Papa* = *Pater* = Father) is merely a later invention of the pious to describe the chief functions and attributes of a priest who is the father of his people, and is not found in writing until the reign of Theodoric the Ostrogoth in the sixth century. It is as if one were willing to call Odysseus King of Ithaca, but refused to add the title

[1] "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My Church." The pun, if one may use the expression, is more apparent in French, "Tu es Pierre, et sur cette pierre je batirai mon Eglise."

[2] See the interesting excavations of the house of M. Clodius Hermes, the host of SS. Peter and Paul, below the Church of S. Sebastiano on the Appian Way; and note also the baptistry or Nymphæum discovered on the Via Nomentana.

A TYPICAL CAPUCHIN MONK

given him by Homer of "Father of the People." Let me repeat that the Pope claims to be the head of the Christian Church purely in virtue of his office as Bishop of Rome. That office carries with it the headship of the Church independently of the person who may hold it or the place where he resides. For example, during the Great Schism of the fourteenth century, when there was one Pope at Avignon, one at Rome, and often one or two more in other odd corners of the world, it was never, so far as I can learn, alleged against any of these gentlemen that they were not Popes because they were not Italians or did not live in Rome. The only ground of disqualification was that they were improperly elected.

The constitution of the Catholic Church is a curious mixture of the extremes of democratic and reactionary ideas. The Papacy is not the exclusive privilege of any caste, and for fifteen hundred years was not the prerogative of any one nation. Indeed, it may even be said to be open to priests of all nations to-day, for it is an open secret that on the last occasion a Spaniard was within an ace of election. Its democratic and international basis is therefore very far from being a mere form. True, the Papacy has often been the prize of contending families, and sometimes of contending nations. It has even been occasionally the appanage of a powerful monarch—the Emperor, the King of France, or the King of Spain. But the holders of the office have always sooner or later reacted desperately against any such subjection, and persons of the very humblest rank have been Pope. Hadrian VI, for example, was a very humble Dutchman who succeeded one of the great Florentine Medici, and all the recent Popes have been of no noble family. Since 1523 no foreigner has actually reigned at St. Peter's, but before then there were many Frenchmen, a Spaniard (Alexander VI, the uncle of Cæsar Borgia), an Englishman (Hadrian IV, better known as Nicolas Brakespear), and even a Jew (Anacletus, of the Pierleone family).

There is a persistent tradition that there was once a woman Pope; and many to this day believe in the legend of Pope Joan. The story, which has recently been learnedly dis-

proved, is that the woman Pope was elected after the death of Leo IV in 856. She had apparently all her life concealed her sex, and had successfully passed through all the various preliminary ecclesiastical grades—a happening in itself sufficiently improbable. The scandal was unmasked because she died in the street on the way to St. John in the Lateran, and in her last agony could no longer keep up the impersonation. So runs the tale; but it is most unlikely that such a person ever existed. For Leo died on the 17th of July, and we have a portrait of the next male Pope, Benedict III, on a coin of the Emperor Lothair, who died on the 28th of September. Unless, therefore, we assume that Lothair's coins were minted after his death, and that this particular coin is posthumous, the utmost possible period which we can allot to Joan's papacy is seventy-two days; and considering the time required for the news to travel, and the coin to be stamped with an effigy of the new Pope, we must regretfully kill her altogether, in spite of strong circumstantial evidence on her side, including many an ancient saying and one very curious custom. An example of the saying is:

Papa Pater pauperum, peperit papissa papellum,

and the custom, which is well attested up to the end of the sixteenth century, consisted in the examination of each newly elected Pope to make sure that he was of the proper sex. A traveller to Rome for the jubilee of 1450 describes the specially constructed chair in which the Pope sat while this constatation was made, and I have seen an old woodcut of the seventeenth century picturing the scene, and inscribed underneath with the word "Habet." How this custom arose it is difficult to explain, except upon the supposition that the people believed profoundly in the story of Pope Joan and that it was necessary to reassure them.

Not only is the Papacy open to all comers, but also the election was originally democratic. Up to 1059 the Pope was chosen by the clergy and faithful of the city of Rome. In that year Nicolas II ordained that he should be more indirectly elected, and that though the clergy, the people,

and the Holy Roman Emperor should jointly retain the right to confirm him in office, the actual choice should be made by the cardinals. The great Hildebrand (Gregory VII) disfranchised the emperor twenty years later, for he would brook no interference by a foreign lay power in the affairs of the Church ; but he did not interfere with the rights of the clergy and people, who retained their voice in the matter for another three-quarters of a century. Even after that date the people were not content to be dumb spectators of the choice of their spiritual and, to the Romans themselves, temporal rulers. In 1378, tired of a succession of French Popes, they burst their way into the conclave, and cried to the assembled cardinals, " Give us a Roman Pope, or we will make your heads redder than your hats." The cardinals made a compromise between their dignity and their fears, and gave them a Neapolitan.

The system of election by the College of Cardinals sitting in conclave has endured for eight hundred years unchanged, except for the salutary regulations calculated to hasten a choice ; for in the old days it was found that the cardinals were much like delegations attending international conferences—they had a right royal time in conclave, and were in no hurry to finish. A system of total seclusion, and of a progressive reduction of the daily menu was therefore instituted, and proved very effective in expediting proceedings.

Apropos of the election of a Pope is told the story of the greatest *gaffe* in history. In the time of Pius IX an American lady had the good fortune to be received personally by His Holiness and shown over all the treasures of the Vatican. She was entranced by the kindliness and condescension of her host, and determined to display at once her gratitude and erudition. " Oh, Holy Father ! " she exclaimed, " I have seen all that I have dreamed of seeing ever since I was a tiny girl, except for one thing." " What is that, my daughter ? " asked the Pope graciously. " A conclave," she replied. The Pope cleared his throat loudly and marched hurriedly away. The certainty of salvation is not proof against a certain

irritation when one hears a person virtually expressing a wish to attend one's funeral.

Once elected the Pope is the biggest autocrat in the world, and rules the Church with an absolute power. He is irremovable, except by his own will or by death ; and in the case of a wicked Pope the faithful have only the consolation of the legend that he will " not see the years of Peter," i.e. that he will not reign more than twenty-five years, the traditional duration of the pontificate of St. Peter (A.D. 42–68). There are occasions on which a Pope has been compelled to abdicate, but they are extremely rare—I can only recall three ; and though one would expect a more frequent readiness to lay down an immense burden, yet the Popes have, with these exceptions, been able to conquer their inclinations. This sentence is not intended to be cynical, for it is the truth that the Pope is one of the hardest worked of men. The whole of the higher patronage of the Church is in his hands, and he has to supervise the entire administrative work. This latter task he performs directly, except in the remoter regions of the earth, where he delegates his authority to apostolic vicars. He has to pronounce upon all matters of faith and doctrine, and last, but not least, he has to receive the thousands and thousands of Catholics—and heretics—who flock every year to see him.

Time has, of course, smoothed some of the complexities of these manifold tasks. It is related that when an official of the Vatican was congratulated upon the admirable arrangements made for the reception of the King and Queen of England in 1923 he retorted quietly, " We have been doing that sort of thing for eleven hundred years." And he was speaking the strict truth. During the centuries of its existence the Roman Church has had leisure to think out most correct social usages. It has also worked out for itself a complete political philosophy, and its attitude upon the vexed question of the Papal infallibility is only the logical consequence of its innate belief in the necessity for some central and decisive authority.

This Papal infallibility, which, as an Article of Faith, dates

only from the Council of 1869, has aroused, equally unjustly, the rage and contempt of the heretic and the pious joy of the ultramontane. It may be well, therefore, to give the substance of the approved definition. The Pope is considered to be infallible when he speaks "*ex cathedra* in defining a doctrine of faith or morals." There is no attempt to explain what is "a doctrine of faith or morals," nor what is speaking *ex cathedra*. The definition of the claim is thus as vague and intrinsically ridiculous as the claim itself; and its sole practical value is that it does enable, on rare occasions, the discipline of the Church to be more rigorously enforced. In point of fact, no such occasion has arisen since the definition was made. Its authors were not stupid men—one of the chief was our own Cardinal Manning—and they were not so fanatical as to insist upon the essential goodness of an Alexander VI or the exemplary character of the government of the Papal States. Their sole aim was to give that increase of authority to the Church which can only come from absolute unity and cohesion. They forced through the doctrine of infallibility, though they must have realized that it would arouse some incredulous laughter, in order to preserve the Church from the greater evil of more serious and better founded criticism, occasioned either by the publication of contradictory tenets, or the undisciplined refusal of the faithful to obey their one spiritual head on earth. For the spectacle, which would otherwise have been possible, of a Catholic refusing to accept the guidance of the Pope, and appealing from him to a Council of Bishops of the Church, of which there has been one, and one only, in four centuries, would have been "a scandal to the pious and a laughing-stock to the profane."

The Church has passed through many vicissitudes before arriving at a position wherein such claims are logical and possible. So far as the obscure history of the first three centuries can be disentangled, it reveals the Bishops of Rome in quite a humble position; nor is there any evidence for thinking that they were more important than the bishops of many other places where existed little groups of the votaries

of the new sect. In the first century the character of the Christians was completely, perhaps deliberately, misunderstood. The words in which Tacitus describes them might have been written by a modern journalist in an article on the Mormons in London. The Christians, "hated for their crimes," were the exponents of a "detestable superstition" which spread to Rome, "whither collected and flourished all things atrocious and shameful"; and they suffered under Nero, "not so much because they were guilty of setting fire to Rome, as because they were the enemies of the human race." The *exitiabilis superstitio* continued to spread, in spite of, or, perhaps, because of, occasional persecutions, of which the last, at the end of the third century, was the prelude to its adoption as the official creed of the empire. The effect upon the Bishops of Rome was prodigious. It was as if a humble Royal Army Service Corps corporal became in the twinkling of an eye the quartermaster-general of the army; for the emperors ceased to be the heads of the State religion, and their place had to be taken by a bishop of the Christian Church. Naturally this bishop could not be other than the Bishop of Rome; and thus figuratively as well as literally the Cross was superimposed upon the Imperial Eagles.

Another fact, however, contributed even more to the extension of the authority of the Roman bishop, namely, the foundation of Constantinople and the permanent transference of the seat of empire to the East. The reader is of course aware that the temporal power of the Popes in the West, and particularly in Rome herself, was based upon the so-called "Donation of Constantine," the document whereby the emperor invests the Bishop of Rome with authority over the patrimony of St. Peter. Though the document may be a forgery, it embodies a truth; for the Popes, in whom was incarnate the conception of an universal spiritual authority, were the only possible successors to, and compensation for, the absent emperors.

Much paper and ink have been wasted in attempts to prove two contradictory theories, the first that Christianity

destroyed the empire, and the second that Christianity preserved it. Neither is true. If we consider, and with justice, the Roman Empire as coterminous with civilization, there is no doubt that the tenets, the practices, and the sectarian struggles of the Christians weakened it enormously as a military power. A Gospel of equality upset a society founded upon slavery, the practice of monasticism buried many potential legions in the wild places of the earth, and the deadly feud between the Arian and Athanasian sects destroyed in the course of two centuries literally many millions of persons. But the Church never during those critical centuries rebelled against the temporal authority, nor sought to deny to Cæsar the things that were his ; nor did the emperors, on the whole, attempt to interfere with the things that were God's. The singular experiment of Julian the Apostate to restore the pagan faith tempered by the Neoplatonist philosophy, is the exception which proves the rule ; and the measure of the support which Christianity gave to the empire is the reluctance of the emperors to desert it. Moreover, the services of the obscure heroes who converted the barbarian nations were simply invaluable, and led to the preservation of much of the organization of civilization which must otherwise have perished. On the whole, it is fairest to say that the destructive and constructive effects of Christianity upon the empire cancelled each other out ; but that its preservative effects after the collapse of the imperial power in the West constitute a new and impressive page upon the credit side of the ledger. For the continuance in the West of the spiritual counterpart of the temporal dominion of Rome kept alive the saving tradition of authority, of a homogeneous civilization, a common culture, and a moral, intellectual, and political standard above and superior to the chaos of the age. After the final erasure of the Arian heresy the Popes continually supported the orthodox or catholic temporal power. They preserved in one corner of the world a peg upon which the vestments of a new empire might hang ; and when Charlemagne led his chivalry into Rome to be crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by the Pope, he was recognizing the light of

authority which the successors of St. Peter had kept burning in the darkness of four hundred years.

There are thus in the Pope's conception of himself two distinct persons—the one the spiritual ruler of the earth, and the other the temporal ruler of the patrimony of St. Peter, i.e. Rome herself and a stretch of country around. But the Pope in his latter capacity should not be confused with the Pope who fought the emperors of the Middle Ages, who interfered in the dynastic troubles and temporal government of the European nations, and who, for example, called upon loyal Catholics in England to dethrone Elizabeth in order to make Philip of Spain king. These activities were but an extension, or corruption, of his spiritual claims. The Crusades made the Pope as powerful a temporal sovereign as many a Roman emperor, but only by the reflection of his spiritual prestige. The great Guelph *versus* Ghibelline struggle which convulsed Italy for several centuries arose out of nothing more substantial than the assertion by the Pope of his claim to rule and regulate the Church in all countries—a claim singularly unpleasant to the lay ruler, because it destroyed his authority over the richest and most powerful section of his subjects. The quarrel was not stupid. The point was, and remains, one of substance, for the most pious sovereign must reflect how a man can be a perfectly loyal subject if he owes only a qualified allegiance, and is ultimately responsible in matters spiritual to an international authority. No one can say precisely where matters temporal end and where matters spiritual begin.

These centuries of conflict, during which the Pope posed with greater or less success as the arbiter of Europe, were really only an interlude. The Pope has ended as he began—as a bishop of the Christian Church, admitted by some to be the chief, considered by others to be only one of a number. The rise of nationalism has killed dead the theory of the temporal power, whether in its narrower or in its broader sense; and the Papacy accepts the fact even while clinging to the old theories. Few would be found to die for their religion, but many for their country. Yet the Pope is still

a great power. His kingdom is still one of the best organized in the world, and his temporal misfortunes have enhanced, if anything, his spiritual éclat. Upon any view the end of the Pope's rule in the Romagna must be reckoned among the most fortunate events in the history of the Catholic Church. The scandal of an effete administration has been sloughed off. The questionable finesse and doubtful ethics of a political priesthood have become superfluous. And the Church remains an institution venerated and respected, which numbers among its servants some of the holiest and most unselfish of the helpers of mankind. By the dispensation of Providence the Catholic Church in a time of humility and adversity such as the present shows its very best qualities. One can admire them wholeheartedly, while at the same time feeling profoundly grateful that these are indeed times of humility, and remembering that these gentle Samaritans would most certainly, and with tears in their eyes, burn one's body to save one's soul, if they could find ecclesiastical courts to condemn and a lay authority to execute the sentence. And sometimes, I confess, when I am gazing into the mild spectacles of a priest, and listening to his suave discourse, I feel the same sensation as a sailor would experience on conversing with a notorious cannibal chief under the guns of his warship. He would know that he would not be eaten, but would also be acutely conscious that the chief would like to eat him. It is also a little trying to feel that one's interlocutor believes one to be infallibly damned.

There are certain echoes out of the past and certain problems arising out of the formation of the Italian State which complicate the position of the Papacy to-day. The so-called Roman question comes from the persistence of the Pope in claiming temporal sovereignty over the patrimony of St. Peter. It is a claim which he successfully asserted in the past against Arnold of Brescia and Cola di Rienzi, and which he still maintains against the House of Savoy. Though Milan would in many respects be a more practical capital of the Italian State sentimental reasons make the choice of Rome unavoidable, and therefore in the same city live cheek-by-

prisoner of the Vatican one day to emerge into the streets of Rome as though the past fifty years had never existed. But the Catholic Church and the Vatican being what they are, nothing of the sort is to be expected for many a long year.

The Reformation, and its repercussions in countries which still remained Catholic, eradicated the political influence of the Pope from a large part of Europe, and the rapid advance of democratic principles under the impulse of the French Revolution did even more to minimize the prestige of a distant foreign, and suspected, authority. For nearly a century the problem before the Papacy has been whether to withdraw from politics altogether or to attempt to keep pace with the modern developments thereof. The former policy is almost impossible for so vast an organization, for the way to heaven lies through the intricacies of life on earth. And if the latter policy be chosen, on which side is the Papal authority to be exercised?

It is a mistake to think that the Papacy has always been on the side of reaction. The Church was the first and for centuries the only education authority; and it has never despised poverty nor been indifferent to the aspirations of the under-dog. There was even a time when Pius IX was positively the only Liberal ruler in Europe. In the sphere of politics the Church is subject to a double pull. Its instinct for order and authority even at the risk of injustice inclines it to Conservatism; its sympathy for poverty and suffering inclines it even to Socialism. Thus, it occurs that a fervent Catholic socialist [1] is by no means a contradiction in terms, and the Russian Communists may reflect, if they are capable of reflection, that their destruction of the Orthodox Church, which is schismatic and not heretic, was as useless and unintelligent as their demolition of bourgeois society.

Here in Italy the Popes stood on their dignity, and refused to sanction Catholic participation in politics for a period of thirty-four years after the loss of their temporal power. "It was not expedient"—to quote the title of the relative

[1] E.g. the Minister of Health in the British Labour Government was a strong Catholic, and yet numbered among the extremists of his party.

encyclical—for good Catholics to serve a State which had robbed the Holy Father. But the removal of the *non expedit* in 1905 marked the beginning of an interesting political movement which has its counterpart also in other countries. These Catholic movements have a variety of names and inspirations. In Austria, I understand, the Kristliche Volkspartei is animated chiefly by anti-Semitism. But here in Italy the Catholic or Popular Party is a much more serious affair. It was not formed until after the war, and it owes nearly everything to a diminutive and desiccated Sicilian priest, Don Luigi Sturzo, who gave it a *raison d'être*, a policy, and a literature.[1] He combined into one organization all the Catholic political fragments which had arisen since the removal of the *non expedit*, and in two years the new party became the arbiter of Italian politics, so that no Government could be born or survive without its sanction. During the so-called " red " years, 1919–1922, it was a formidable competitor of Socialism, and divided with that movement the mass of the active political vote. Its programme was a compound of conservative clericalism, consisting of the defence of the property and privileges of the Church and advanced Social Reform. An analogous situation would arise in Britain if the moderate Socialists added the maintenance of Church Establishment to their actual programme. Inasmuch as Church property can hardly be preserved if lay property is not, the Populars, until the rise of Fascismo, were the real bulwark of law and order against the red madness, and it was due to them that the greater part of the Bolshevik danger in Italy was over before Fascismo came on the scenes.

I do not intend to labour the history of this party, which is now in opposition, and is still the strongest in Italy outside the official Fascista Party ; but it is instructive to note the Vatican's attitude towards its self-constituted champions. There is no doubt that at the beginning the Populars were heartily encouraged. Then certain aspects of its social policy, such as the encouragement of agrarian expropriation, and,

[1] There were only two Catholics in the Parliament of 1905 and a small handful of so-called Catholic Deputies under Signor Meda, in those of 1909 and 1913.

above all, the pre-eminence of Don Sturzo in its organization and counsels, caused a cooling of the atmosphere which has since become glacial. The Vatican is strictly practical and likes to deal with those who can deliver the goods; but it has also the conviction that the professions of politics and the priesthood are generally incompatible, or rather that the former should be reserved for the higher grades of churchmen, so that the policy pursued by the Church in mundane affairs should be consistent and cohesive. As regards that policy the present Pope represents the democratic rather than the autocratic tendency within the Church, and is a man of the widest humanitarian and charitable sentiments. His natural instinct is to avoid partisanship of any kind. But his sacred charge is to defend the interests of the Church, and to succour human misery wherever and whenever found. Since he has no longer the power to issue his orders to the world, he is forced to approach those who have the power, that is to say, to intervene as little, as discreetly, but as effectively as possible in politics. He cannot remain totally indifferent to the character of the Government of Italy, nor to the treatment of Catholics and of Church property in other parts of the world.

The present situation puts him in a peculiar difficulty. He shares with the Fascisti the ideal of a supreme central authority, and he welcomes the steps which have been taken to restore the prestige of the Church. But their methods of violence are totally repugnant to him, and, unluckily for them, they have poured out the vials of their wrath upon those Catholic institutions of a semi-charitable nature, which are particularly dear to the Vatican, but which labour under the suspicion of being connected with the Popular Party. The Pope, therefore, issues repeated instructions that priests of all categories are to remain strictly neutral, and are not only to refrain from participation in electoral contests, but to resign from all political offices they may hold, and to cease writing in party newspapers. These orders constitute a terrible blow to the Popular Party, because hitherto the local priests have been their best election agents,

and interfere drastically with the activities of Don Sturzo. But the Pope then turns round and fulminates against political violence, gives a large sum in aid of those institutions whose property has been damaged by the Fascisti, and lets it be known that he considers their goings-on thoroughly reprehensible. In other words, the Pope himself takes that part in politics which he forbids to his clergy. The net effect is that both Government and opposition may consider themselves soundly smacked by the ecclesiastical authority, and the advice of St. Paul to be " all things to all men " has been amended by the Vatican into " all nasty things to all men."

It must be added, however, that in the obscure struggle which is now being waged between the Fascisti and their political opponents the Vatican is, on the whole, more inclined to favour the former, though only because it is afraid of the consequences of public disorders which might follow the victory of the latter. There is a good deal of concealed political desire in the witty reply reported to have been given by the Pope in the course of a conversation about the duration of Fascismo. " How long," inquired his companion, " does your Holiness think the Fascisti will last ? " " Mussolini says sixty years," replied the Pope, diplomatically. " And after ? " persisted the inquirer. " Oh, Giovanni Giolitti," said the Pope, quick as a flash.[1] It is, indeed, not altogether an agreeable thing to know that very many of the most zealous Catholics are in opposition. In truth, however, even in Italy, a political party cannot live by Catholicism alone, and a study of the literature and activities of the Populars at once reveals that the ecclesiastical part of their programme is entirely subordinate to the political.

The Papacy to-day, therefore, is little more than a charitable organization on an international scale, wrapped round with an attractive atmosphere of tradition and mystery. Put differently, it may be called a spiritual League of Nations with most of the characteristics of its temporal sister, including the purest humanitarian motives, and liability to the

[1] The point of this reply is that Signor Giolitti is already eighty-three years old, and has been six times Prime Minister, generally after all other political leaders have involved themselves in hopeless difficulties.

darkest political suspicion. It has, however, really ceased to have or to desire political importance in the old sense, and is content to touch the affairs of nations only in so far as the politicians of the nations touch it. Clericalism can only be revived by a revival of anti-clericalism, Popery by a cry of "No Popery"; and those who protested against the visit of the British sovereigns to the Vatican were guilty of a ludicrous misconception of the modern Roman Church.

And yet—and yet it has not formally abated one jot or tittle of its pretensions, and it may some day become a force better, purer, and more truly powerful than it has ever been in the past; for though it suffers to-day from the universal religious indifference, it has no longer to combine the incompatible rôles of the Vicary of Christ and a petty Italian despotism. The Pope still keeps the state of a court, and the approach to him is guarded by Swiss halberdiers in patchwork uniforms of red and yellow, by enormous cuirassiers in helmet, breastplate, and high shiny boots; and he has a body of nondescript infantry in shako, dark tunic, and light blue trousers, which presents an ancient type of rifle to august visitors on State occasions. But these are merely the stage properties of a play which has long ceased to run, and the Pope is really quite free to develop the power and glory of the spiritual unfettered by the trivial preoccupations of the temporal rôle. Talleyrand is free to become St. Francis.

At the moment the Papacy labours under the suspicion of being an Italian preserve. But, in fact, even the Italian Cardinals who form so large a section (not, however, the majority) of the Sacred College are not bigoted on the point; and some at least realize the impetus which a foreigner alone could give to the Papacy. Speaking as an outsider, I should say that nothing would so much contribute to a revival of the international prestige of the Papacy as the institution of a rule that the Popes should be chosen from each of the great nations in turn, and not merely from the Catholic nations, but all from of European habitation or descent.

It is difficult to estimate exactly the hold which the Catholic Church has upon the Italian people, but it is still very

considerable, particularly in the South. In the old days the father of the family made it a point of honour to devote at least one of his sons to the priesthood, considered as the most honourable of professions, which gave a distinct step upwards in the social scale to the scion of a provincial family. It has, however, ceased to be lucrative, or even to afford an unsupplemented livelihood, and there are reports that the quality of candidates has much declined. The legend also that the priests encouraged "defeatism" during the war has gained some credence owing to the well-meaning but untimely efforts of Benedict XV to mediate between the combatants, and this has contributed to lowering the prestige of the clergy; nor, indeed, has the "black crow" ever been popular in the Italian village. To judge, however, from the number which throng the streets of Rome and from their comfortable appearance, there is still a goodly supply of candidates, and there are still plentiful pickings. Moreover, the multitudinous churches are all decently cared for, and are the sweetest smelling of all the Roman buildings, comparing very favourably with the ill-concealed dirtiness of the public offices and private dwellings. The calvaries or shrines at the street corners are also invariably carefully tended, and few lack the little oil lamp ceaselessly burning before the crucifix. The forms at least of religion remain even if the people have ceased to be religious, and the survival of superstition makes the conciliation of the Divine an ever-present necessity, even where worship for worship's sake has ceased to appeal.

The services in the churches are not impressive, in spite of the most magnificent settings in the world. Save on special occasions, such as Easter or Christmas, the congregations are small, though at any hour in any church there may be seen one or two black kneeling figures of humble folk absorbed in their devotions. This is no reflection upon the genuineness of the clergy, but they have really no power to make the services attractive. Much has been written about Church music in Rome. It is a disappointment and a delusion. The chants and anthems in St. Peter's, for example, are of great antiquity, and their secret was jealously guarded until some

expert visitor attended the services and wrote them down. But to me, at least, they have no appeal. The choir seems imperfectly trained ; and the voices which echo and re-echo throughout the recesses of the vast dome seem to have lost their purity without attaining a compensating mystery. In some of the smaller churches the singing is truer and better, and once, quite by chance, on a summer's evening, I heard some exquisite chanting in Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

After all, however, the effect of Church music depends largely on the mood and the neighbours of the auditor. In the great churches, on solemn occasions, it is extremely difficult not to be both uncomfortable and unhappy. Go to Santa Maria Maggiore on Christmas eve. The stately flights of steps up to the vast building are black with people. The narrow doors, curtained with huge and evil-smelling slabs of leather, are choked with those outside crying " Forward ! " and those inside crying " Back ! " Within the church is a seething mass of chattering, laughing, pushing, pulling, and spitting Italians, with a liberal sprinkling of bewildered foreigners. Occasionally wafts of heavy incense imperfectly fulfil their original and historic function of blanketing (with a covering of sweeter perfume) the effect of crowding several thousand persons in an enclosed space. The roll of an organ and the shriller sound of singing contend in vain with the roar of conversation. The music itself is but an unending repetition of " Venite fideles." The congregation strolls impersonally up and down so far as the congestion permits. Midnight sounds, and on the stroke there is a tumult of clapping and cheering as the officiating ecclesiastic is borne round the church preceded and followed by a double file of acolytes swinging censers. The whole ceremony is so reminiscent of the cinematograph that it breeds a sense of *malaise* and a desire to escape outside. The people are not really irreverent. It is the tradition to make a noise in church, and few can follow, none can participate in, a service conducted in a dead language. Such a thing as a sermon is unknown ; the congregation cannot pray aloud, nor is it expected to make responses ; and the whole service is an echo out of the past,

cold in spite of its colour, dead and impersonal in spite of the living men who conduct it. Church services are, indeed, the least important part of the Roman religion—the part where the priest, if he is nearest to his Master is also farthest from his flock. Ruskin's bitter sarcasm that " Divine service will be performed " was an excellent formula for a service the form of which is gone through occurs irresistibly to the mind of a spectator of one of these ceremonies.

There are others, however, which must command his respect, even if they cannot influence his unbelief. The Roman would be horrified if he were accused of irreligion. He will tell you that epidemic diseases cannot establish a footing in the quarter of Santa Maria della Salute, whose image was aforetime carried round the city in procession in order to repel the attacks of the plague. He brings his children to the festival of the Bambin Gesu. He seeks consolation before Our Lady of Tears, whose shrine is the shelter of the pitiful ever since the tears burst from her eyes at the sight of a horrid murder done before her image. And, above all, he is proud of the Pope, because the Pope remade his city, because the Pope is the symbol of his city's eternal greatness, and because, therefore, the Pope is his very own.

CHAPTER VI

ROMAN ROADS AND STREETS

I HAVE often amused myself by elaborating a theory that the character of a nation is demonstrated by the kind of roads it makes for itself. The theory is purely empirical, but there are many facts to be adduced in its favour. The Spanish roads, for example, are a wonderful example of the workings of the *mañana* spirit. They are so wide that the Escurial on wheels could easily pass along them. This magnificent expanse of road is bordered on one side only by equally magnificent heaps of road metal. As the traveller crawls joltingly along the pitted and corrugated surface he thinks with regret that if only he had delayed his journey for a week his car would have rolled swiftly and smoothly over a perfect surface. But, as a matter of fact, had he delayed it for a full year the conditions would have been exactly the same, except that the road metal would have been piled on the other side of the road. For some honourable gentleman has contracted with the municipality to deliver so many tons of metal on to the road. He fulfils his contract the first year by dumping it in heaps by the roadside. No one touches it; and therefore, when the contract is renewed for the next year, all that the contractor has to do is to send his carts, load up the same metal, and dump it down on the other side. Except for an occasional flint which falls from the carts during this process not an ounce of repairing material ever reaches the road itself.

Mr. Chesterton, in a delightful poem, has explained the crookedness of the English road by his usual form of flattery, that is to say, the insulting supposition that his countrymen are inordinately fond of the beer which he never touches himself:

> Before the Roman came to Rye, or out to Severn strode
> The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.

Later in the same work, however, he admits the truer, if less attractive, explanation, that our twisty roads are due to a compelling tenderness for the rights of property. He should have added a complete disregard of military requirements. Our only great military dictator was a cavalryman and a farmer, who would have thought it a useless crime to drive a road through a growing crop. Evidence of the same spirit may be seen in Hungary, a horseman's and farmer's country, where an unmetalled track is considered quite good enough.

But France and Italy both bear the imprint of the infantryman, the trade-mark of generals who relied on heavy infantry and wheeled transport, and the communications of both countries are deliberately designed to satisfy their requirements. If one could erase from the map everything except the roads, both France and Italy would present the appearance of one or more fans, with spokes radiating outwards from central points, and held together by cross-pieces at regular intervals. In France the prevailing system is, of course, the Napoleonic; but in Italy it is the Roman, which indeed has left traces upon every country through which the legions marched. The famous saying that "all roads lead to Rome" is mediaeval, not classical, and arose from the influx of pilgrims rather than from the commerce of the ancient empire.[1] But the fact was there even before it was observed. Dr. Karl Miller published some forty years ago an extremely interesting map, called the "Map of Castorius," which, though it bears evident signs of mediaeval editing, is probably based upon a classical road-map. It shows in panoramic form the whole of the land communications of the empire, from Indo-China (by a somewhat optimistic extension of the frontier) to Kent. The rest of Britain is unfortunately missing, though the reader who is interested will find all the Roman roads in Britain marked upon a special map issued in 1924 by the Ordnance Survey.

On the "Map of Castorius" it is a little difficult to pick out the individual roads and towns, because the author has

[1] Some reader may be able to explain the meaning of the Scottish saying: "To drive a snail to Rome," and to explain whether it refers to the practicability, the slowness, or the difficulty of the journey.

TYPICAL ROMAN WINE CARTS

adapted his geography to the size and shape of his paper, so that the Bay of Biscay, for example, is compressed to the form of a fat sausage, and Italy is elongated and broadened at the same time, to the vast detriment of the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas. But you may journey without interruption to the Eastern deserts, "places uninhabitable through want of water," and a mysterious spot where "scorpions are born"; or you may strike westwards over the Alps to Leminco (Lemincum = Chambéry), Vigenna, and Lugduno caput Galliæ (Lugudunum = Lyons), up the Arar to Cabillione (Cabillonum = Chalon-sur-Sâone); thence either north by Turnaco (Turnacum = Tournay), or west by Sammarobriva (Amiens, the Somme town), by Nemetacum (Arras), or Duroico Regum (Doullens) to Gesogiaco, "quod nunc Castello Menapiorum" [1] (Gesoriacum = Bononia = Boulogne). From this port or from the more usual Portus Itius, more to the north, but still south of Calais, you must cross the sea and a tear in the map in order to arrive at Dubris (Portus Dubræ = Dover), or Lemanio (Portus Lemanæ = Hythe); and finally go off the map altogether at Camuloduno (Camulodunum = Colchester). It is rather curious that the ancient equivalents of Paris and London are not found on the map. Perhaps on that of two thousand years hence they will not be found either.

I have spent some time in following up the lines of the old Roman roads in Italy, and since, so far as I can discover, there is no work on the subject which gives an idea of the road system in all its magnificent simplicity I shall devote a few paragraphs to a description of some of the most famous highways.[2]

The origin of the Roman road was military. The system was extended simultaneously with the progress of their conquests and contributed not a little to their thoroughness and permanence. The Roman road was not, however, as is generally supposed, dead straight, but more usually constructed in sections, each one of which was straight, but at

[1] This is a mistake of the cartographer's. Castellum Menapiorum is Cassel, not Boulogne.

[2] The Antonine itineraries are worth studying in this connexion. They were compiled, as their name implies, between A.D. 100 and 190.

an angle with its neighbours. The great feature of it was that it was paved, and therefore infinitely durable. The paving of roads was, at least in the West, a purely Roman invention, unless it be supposed that the idea could have percolated through from China, where the paved road is, I believe, even older. To this day the type of Roman paving is unmistakable. Possibly the best example may be seen at Pompeii, but at Rome itself there are patches in the Forum (the Via Sacra), on the Palatine (the Clivus Victoriae), and outside the walls there is a considerable stretch on the Via Nomentana. It consists of big slabs, more or less flattened, placed as close together as the irregularities of their contours will allow. The general appearance must have been very much akin to that of a street in modern Naples. Of course the surface was far from perfect, and a motor car which attempted to travel over it at any speed would quickly have broken its springs. But for slow-moving transport, which took no harm from bumps and jolts, and for human feet which require a regular succession of firm, unyielding stepping-stones, the system was ideal.

The first two military roads were the Via Appia and the Via Latina. The latter has fallen into disuse, but the former is still one of the chief highways to Southern Italy. The first section runs across the Campagna to the Alban Hills. There, there is a slight turn, and the next section runs straight down to the coast at Terracina. The road then turns sharp west inland to Fondi, once a considerable place, to judge by the Roman walls which still encircle it; and indeed the road makes a special detour to visit it before turning back once more to the coast at Formia. It follows the shore to the mouth of the River Liris, which it crosses at the old Minturnæ. Thence it sweeps round the massif of the Monte Massico to Mandragone, whence it turns once again inland and runs across the plain to Capua. Here the part constructed in 312 B.C. by the censor Appius Claudius Cæcus, the same who built the Appian Aqueduct, ends. Later generations, however, continued it to Benevento (we may conjecture after the wars against Pyrrhus) and Tarento. The great road finally

cuts across the Calabrian peninsula and finishes at Brindisi. Throughout its whole length it bears the same name, and up to Benevento is in continual use. Thereafter it occasionally fails. Dr. Ashby, of the British School, who has attempted to trace out the whole course, says that after leaving Venosa, for example, it has been completely obliterated by a sheep-track, along which flocks have been driven for centuries. He points out also that for this southern portion of its course was substituted under the empire, as the more popular route, the Via Trajana, which cut straight across Italy and followed the east coast down to Brindisi.

The reader who follows this description on a map will see what a hold the Via Appia gave the early Romans upon both the Roman and Neapolitan plains; for along it could be pushed at great speed troops to Capua, the key of the latter, and with Rome and Capua as operation bases the troublesome mountain massif, the Alban and Volscian ranges, between the two, could be attacked on both flanks.

To complete this encirclement there was another great road, the Via Latina, which may even have been prior in date to the Via Appia. The two were at least sisters, which left the mother city by the same gate, the Porta Capena (Capuan Gate), whose site is still marked by a heap of rubble in the fields opposite the Baths of Caracalla. Under Augustus, when a further stretch of country had been included in the walls, the two roads forked within the city, and left by different gates, to which each gave its name. The Porta Appia has since become the Porta San Sebastiano, but the Via Latina still issues from the Porta Latina, more to the east. Thence its course may be imperfectly traced across the plain to the Alban Hills, which it climbed to the famous pass of Algidus. Crossing this ancient battle-ground, it came down into the valley of the Sacco and followed, roughly, the line of the modern railway to Naples as far as the crossing over the Volturno, at which point it rejoined the Via Appia. The remarkable feature of the Via Latina is the number of ruins which flank it on either side, which are the remains of fortresses built in the early days when the road was not safe,

and of villas erected when it had become the route of travellers in search of country air.

The westward roads from Rome were merely the two on either side of the Tiber which linked the capital with the old port of Ostia on the south, and the new Portus Augusti on the north bank of the river. The latter, the road to Fiumicino, is the road more frequently used to-day, but both are sadly deserted and silent compared to the roads of the imperial epoch, thronged with multitudinous convoys bringing the corn of Africa and Egypt, the silks of the East, and the slaves of every country to the capital. The roads to the east are more numerous and important. Every visitor to Rome who has been out to see Hadrian's Villa has travelled one of them, the Via Tiburtina, so called because it originally ran only to Tibur, the ancient name for Tivoli. It is one of the best conditioned of the Roman roads, and where it passes over the Anio there stands a round tomb, which enshrines a memory of our own country, for it was built by Aulus Plautius, sometime Governor of Britain. It sweeps smoothly up the olive-clad slopes to Tivoli, and at every curve offers a vista of dim green and brown country stretching away to where St. Peter's rises like a thimble of silver on a patterned cloth. At a very early date this road was continued as far as Alba Fucens, the Roman outpost to the north of the Fucine Lake, and in its final form extended to the Adriatic, which it reached at Aternum, just north of the modern Ortona, being known beyond Tivoli as the Via Valeria.

The other road across the Apennines was the Via Salaria, the Salt Road, by which the inland tribes used to come down to the salt marches at the mouth of the Tiber, and which naturally follows the course of that river for some twenty miles, through Fidenæ, the Roman base in the later wars against Veii, up to Erctum, the modern Correse, whence it swung east over the mountains to Rieti and Amiternum. The latter was an important town, whose site is marked by imposing ruins, not far from the modern Aquila. Thence the Via Salaria crossed the last ridge, bearing to the north-east by Teramo, and reached the sea at Castrum Novum, near Giulia-

nova. The other eastern and south-eastern highways were merely loops off the main roads; the Tuscolana, Labicana, and Prænestina passing by Tusculum, Labici, and Præneste respectively, to become tributaries of the Latina, and the Nomentana running through Nomentum to rejoin the Salaria.

It is the great north roads, however, which are naturally the most interesting to an European, and it was in that direction that the road-system could obviously best be developed. The Flaminia, which leaves Rome by the modern Porta del Popolo, but for whose true source one must mount the Corso to the Capitol, has some claims to be the second longest road in the world, being only surpassed by the Grand Trunk from Calcutta to Peshawar. For it runs over the Ponte Milvio, through Narni to Rimini. As far as this point it was constructed by the censor Flaminius in 220 B.C., and was finished the year before Hannibal appeared in Italy. From Rimini, under the name of the Via Aemilia, it ran over the Po at Placentia (Piacenza), and so on to Mediolanum (Milan). Here was the starting-point of three roads over the Alps, one by the eastern shore of Lake Como over the Rhætian Alps to Augsburg, which was the shortest route to the Danube frontier; and a second by Novara, Vercelli, Aosta, over the Graian Alps to Conflans (Ad Publicanos), Geneva, Lausanne, Salothurn, and the Rhine. At Conflans this second road forked, and it was really its main branch which ran over the Little St. Bernard to the Rhone at Vienne. The third ran by Vercelli and Turin over the Cottian Alps to Susa (Segusio) and Arles (Arelate). The direct route of the Via Flaminia-Æmilia is the second, which, after reaching the Rhone at Vienne, runs up the river valley to Lyons. From Lyons to Britain the itinerary has already been given; but after emerging from the sea at Dover, under the name of Watling Street, it runs to Canterbury (Durovernum Cantiacorum), Rochester, London, St. Albans, Leicester, Lincoln, and York to the Wall of Hadrian at Halton, and thence further still to the vallum at Edinburgh. Here, though there are signs that it went on even to the estuary of the Tay, we may leave it, after a journey of seventeen hundred miles. In Italy, even

after the construction of other northern roads, the Flaminia continued to be the favourite, and on the silver cups discovered in the Baths of Vicarello we may read how some Spanish travellers from Gades, instead of taking the Ligurian coast road (the Julia Augusta) and the Via Aurelia through Pisa to Rome preferred to go right across to Rimini and thence to the city by the Flaminia.

This main artery had another vein which followed the east coast to Ravenna, and thence led to Padova, Aquileia, Trieste, and Laibach, with a branch at Trieste into Dalmatia. For the latter part of its length this was known as the Via Postumia. At Padova it was joined by the road from the Austrian Vienna, which came down the Adige valley to Verona under the name of the Claudia Augusta.

From Rome itself there were two other roads to the north. The earliest in date was the Via Clodia, or Claudia, which branched off from the Flaminia at the Ponte Milvio, and ran up into the heart of Etruria. It may be traced as far as Viterbo, but thereafter, though it certainly went much farther, all vestiges of it have disappeared. The second road which superseded the Via Claudia at a later date was the Cassia. It diverged from the Claudia near Veii, and went on by Florence to Lucca, whence it put forth two prongs to join the Aurelia. Here I end my catalogue of the Roman roads, which, uninteresting as it may appear on paper, serves nevertheless the double purpose of showing the extraordinary degree of development attained by the Romans in their communications, and of indicating to the traveller the best way to see Italy if he is fortunate enough to own or to have borrowed a motor-car. For to me at least there is something infinitely attractive in following the steps of the travellers of the past; and moreover, these old highways are far the best even for modern travel.

Judged by modern requirements, the roads of Italy are excellent in the North, fair in the Centre, and foul in the South; in short, the quality depends roughly upon the degree of civilization attained by the population. He who observed the magnificent construction and durability of the roads near the front during the war would have concluded that the

Italians had inherited in full measure the genius of the Romans for road-making. The excellence, however, apart from the engineering, is due to the local abundance of the finest road metal in the world—a rock that is almost marble. Here in Rome, where the subsoil is brittle, and the local stone is soft and sandy, it is appallingly difficult to keep a road in good order. The favourite method a few years ago was to pave with small stone blocks, carefully squared at the top, and tapering slightly at the base. The Via Appia Nuova is thus constructed, as well as nearly all the streets in the old quarter. But the surface cannot bear a continual traffic of heavy lorries and wine-carts, and goes into ridges with deep valleys between, in addition to the usual pot-holes. The tram lines are imperfectly supported by iron wedges, and the weight of the trams causes the neighbouring stones to tilt and capsize, so that to cross a tram line is to surmount a formidable ditch, and the trams themselves progress in a series of switchback jerks, very alarming to the uninitiated. But the rail is solid enough not to bend beneath the weight of an ordinary taxi, and hence comes the particular bent of the Roman chauffeur for driving with his wheels actually on the lines even on the muddiest day. It is an alarming experience, for the wheels frequently skid off the rails into the adjoining crevasses, and the unhappy fare is either thrown violently against the sides or bounced until his hat is crushed against the roof.

In the new quarter this paving has mostly given way to the ordinary road metal; and sometimes, as a great treat, the municipality presents the citizens with a few yards of macadam. But nothing can ever really modernize the streets of the old quarter. They are generally fearfully and wonderfully crooked, and even when straight they are and must remain perennially narrow. A modern municipality in London or Paris is the more of a benefactor the more it demolishes to drive great arteries of traffic through its city. But who can blame the municipality of Rome for refusing to widen its streets when every yard taken would doom some Renaissance palace or some scrap of irreplaceable classic construction? It takes the steely heart of a vandalic and irresponsible Pope carelessly

to pull down an arch of Marcus Aurelius in order to widen the Corso, and no elected body would dare do such a thing.

The result of this inevitable conservatism is to make a journey through Rome the most exasperating experience of a lifetime. The different kinds of traffic have widely different velocities. There are motor-cars, omnibuses,[1] trams, horse-drawn cabs, and carts of every description, all crowding down the streets, which naturally follow the valleys between the Seven Hills. A new nursery rhyme might almost be invented to run, "Car cannot pass 'bus, 'bus cannot pass tram, tram cannot pass cab, cab cannot pass cart, which moves in the city which Cæsar built." In truth, every crossing is a squirming mass of hooting, squeaking, rattling, panting vehicles, in the middle of which a bewildered policeman waves his arms in every direction, and pedestrians insinuate bodies long adapted to allow a mudguard to pass over their backs at the same time as a cab-shaft passes under their noses. Only the possession of a perfect sense of disorder saves the Roman streets from an hourly resemblance to the bloodiest of battlefields. The unsophisticated stranger emerges from this turmoil into the larger, but not quieter, space of a square, like a Rugby footballer from the bottom of a collapsed scrum, deafened, dusty, or muddy, according to the prevailing weather, and slightly mangled.

The art of naming the streets and squares of a great city has degenerated into the conventional affixing of a plaque bearing the name of some more or less unknown person or event; and what could be made a catalogue of romance becomes a nominal roll of Smiths, Browns, and Robinsons. Sometimes, by some freak of chance, even in Britain, a pleasing fancy has conquered this drabness. There is a street in Hull called the Land of Green Ginger, and though a more realistic title would be Muck Lane, one reads the actual legend with a sense of glorying in the triumph of mind over matter. London has also still one or two such romantic

[1] It is characteristic of Italy that the city with the narrowest streets has the largest omnibuses in the world. These are enormous electrically propelled vehicles, so wide that at a certain part of their course, near the Capitol, they have to wait at the top of the street until not even a bicycle narrows the passage. They then dash down at fearful speed, literally grazing the houses as they pass.

touches. There is, or was, the street of Petty France within a stone's throw of Westminster; and the sweet rusticity of a "lane" or "garden" still lingers in the name of many a filthy alley and square of unrelieved brick and mortar. No city, however, possesses so charming a nomenclature as Rome, and nearly every name recalls some incident out of the historical and mysterious past.

The new quarter commemorates the Risorgimento, or unification of Italy, and it gives one no particular thrill to find a Via Vente Settembre, or Via Cavour, though the former terminates at the Porta Pia and the latter at the Forum Romanum, and though all the Risorgimento streets have some pretensions to modernity. But the old quarter is a fascinating medley in which half a dozen categories of names may be distinguished. It is pleasantly curious to walk down a street and stroll round a sunny square, which have obviously existed without the shifting of a stone for five or six hundred years, and find that they bear the name of the gentleman with whom one has just been playing tennis. Such are the Piazza Paganica or the Piazza Sciarra; but the most famous of all, the Piazza Colonna, has no relation to the great family, and takes its name from the column of Marcus Aurelius, which rises in its midst. A second group of names records the epoch of the Guild in Rome, when every trade had its well-defined habitation in its own street. Such are the generic Via Dei Falegnami (carpenters), Panellari (panel-makers), Sediari (chair-makers), Carbonari (charcoal-burners).

Next come those which commemorate customs or festivals, among which are some extremely curious. The Bocca della Verita takes its name from a marble plaque still visible in the porch of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, in the opening in which the Romans used to place their hand when swearing an oath. The Campo di Fiore (flower field) is the site of a weekly market, where on Wednesday mornings occasionally—very occasionally—a good bargain may be discovered among the saleable rubbish exposed on hundreds of little booths. But the title is misleading, for there is not a flower to be seen, and the hope of a bargain is usually disappointed; for one

always finds the person who serves one from behind a rough wooden counter is precisely the same as attempted to serve one the day before from behind the shining mahogany of a fashionable shop. And he recognizes one at once, and is careful to demand yesterday's fashionable price.

There are also the names which denote some prominent monument of the street or square. The little tortoises clambering over the basin of their exquisitely simple fountain have their square called after them, the Piazza delle Tartarughe.[1] Pasquino also has his, and Bernini's Triton in the Piazza Barberini gives his name to the main street between the old and new quarters. The Via Condotti is so called because the conduit of the Aqua Virgo used to pass down it, before turning left to supply the Trevi Fountain, and there are countless other streets and squares named from the saints whose churches stand therein. Perhaps the most delightful group of all comprises those names which have no explanation except that in themselves they are full of music and imagery. Such are the Via Bocca di Leone (The Street of the Lion's mouth) ; the Via del Babuino (Street of the Baboon), the Via de' Delfini (Street of the Dolphins), or the Via delle Botteghe Oscure (Street of the Dark Shops). Last of all come the classical survivals, the Via di Monte Tarpeo, which fringes the sheer rock down which the traitress Tarpeia, and, after her, many another criminal, was flung ; the Via Lata (Broad Street) which is one of the narrowest in the city ; the Via del Velabro, and so on up to all the spots famous in the long history of Rome, headed by the Campidoglio, or Capitol, itself. I am conscious that a string of names, however classified, cannot convey to one who knows not the city that sense of life and poetry which is attained by daily walking through the streets ; and my proper abode ought to be the Via dell' Umilta, a title which needs no translation. I can only say, therefore, to the cold and prosaic reader, " Come and see how it feels to live in the street of the Tarpeian Mount, and to stroll out across the Capitol up to the Altar of Heaven. Will it not be better than living in Smith Street, Putney, and travelling by Underground to the Bank ? "

[1] Sometimes called also the Piazza Mattei.

CHAPTER VII

THE FOREIGNER IN ROME

Nel colonizzare un' isola, la prima fabbrica eretta da un Spagnuolo sarebbe una Chiesa, da un Francese un forte, da un Ollandese un magazzino, e da un Inglese una bottega di birra.[1]

THE foreign colonies in Rome, whose illustrious past was described in a previous chapter, have their modern and modest progeny; and since there is a going to Rome nowadays for other reasons than love of the Faith, the descendants of the ancient establishments are not confined to theological colleges. As the tourist is the modern pilgrim, so also there has sprung up quite a group of permanent residents, attracted either by the climate, their professional labours, or the needs of their migratory countrymen. The Briton has often preferred to settle himself in one of the historic Italian provincial towns, as was the case with the Brownings; and Florence in particular, remains a favourite abode of his. Recently also in the towns along the Ligurian coast there have been many British settlers, who have hoped to make a modest income go further in a land where living is cheaper than at home. There are also permanent British business communities in the large cities. The chief is at Milan, but there are others of lesser importance at Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, and Trieste. In Sicily there is another British group, who have been unable to tear themselves away from the glorious slopes of Taormina; and an interesting story is told of the founder of Dashwood's Hotel at that place. When the ground was being cleared for the erection of the building, the remains of a Roman villa were excavated, which comprised the mosaic pavements of several rooms. One of these

[1] If the various nations had to colonize an island, the first building erected by a Spaniard would be a church, by a Frenchman a fortress, by a Dutchman a shop, and by an Englishman a public-house.

represented a man dashing at a block of wood with an axe—a remarkable coincidence and a lucky omen.

In Rome the British community consists chiefly of the archæological and diplomatic bodies, together with a sprinkling of those who cater for the Briton who arrives in Rome without a word of any language except his own. There are for example, the English book- and tea-shops in the Piazza di Spagna; an English chemist in the Corso; and, of course, the ubiquitous Mr. Cook. The Piazza di Spagna used to be—and still is—considered the centre of the foreign quarter, but there is really little solid reason for this idea. It arises not from the residence of foreigners there, but from their frequentation of the place. There are few more pleasant morning strolls than a walk to buy flowers from the booths which underline the whitey-yellow column of the great staircase with a bar of riotous colour. The adventurous will then insensibly be led on to mount the steps to the twin towers of the Church of the Trinita de' Monti. This fact is well known to the Roman beggars, who profit therefrom to lie in comfortable wait in the patches of shade cast by the balustrade. I have never seen the persons in picturesque costume who are supposed to haunt the staircase in readiness to be hired as artists' models. The actual beggars bear no trace of the poverty of that romantic class; there is, indeed, nothing of poverty about them except their dirt.

The Italians have a keen eye for the different nationalities of their visitors, and have attributed to each a number of characteristics which would surprise them were they but aware of the comments hurled at them in the Roman patois. I am sorry to say that the British are not flattered. One saying of considerable currency is, "Inglese italianato, diavolo incarnato" ("An Englishman Italianized is the devil incarnate"). I do not know why this hostile verdict is pronounced, unless it be that our countrymen betray an aggravating reluctance to pay extortionate prices. At any rate, there it is; nor can the Scotchman or Welshman flatter himself that he is not included, for the Italian shows an obtuse indifference to the differences between the inhabitants of the

British Isles, and a dreadful tendency to confound them all in the common name of "English." Still more afflicting to the prophets of the supreme virtues of the Celtic fringe is the habit, common in Italy, of calling even an Irishman an "English Catholic." One is bound to confess that the theory which holds the English to be an effete race, galvanized into temporary energy by an infusion of Scotch, Welsh, or Irish blood, gains no support on the Continent. One is reminded of the story of the Scotchman who went on a business voyage into England. On his return the traveller was asked by his cronies at the local club what he thought of the English. "Weel," he replied, "I didna' ha' much opportunity of studyin' the bodies. Ye see, I saw maistly the heeds o' depairtments, and they wis a' Scotch." "Ah," said an Englishman from the corner, "but did you see the shareholders?" "Na." "Well, if you had, you would have seen the English."

The unkind saying quoted above is not, however, a fair reflection of the general attitude of the Italians towards the British. The average Italian is convinced that the Briton is "devilish deep," and the comments which are made upon British politics show that in the Italian estimation the British merely pretend to quarrel with each other in order the more easily to pursue an undeviating and egotistical foreign policy. This belief inspires considerable respect, and also engenders great irritation whenever the Italian thinks of the British Empire which sits on the various portions of the globe they would like to see thick with Italian emigrants. A goodly number of Italians, particularly those married to Americans, send their sons to be educated in England, and this is a unconscious tribute to a race and a system which, for the most part, they do not understand. A sentence of the London correspondent of a Rome paper in reference to the recent general election reflects very accurately his country's opinion of ours. "The events which have led up to this election," he said, "would have caused an explosion of scandal in any other country; but this people offer an object-lesson to other democracies. For the references to

these events is very discreet and the opposing leaders display the utmost resolution to wash their dirty linen in their own house."

We are, indeed, a ceaseless puzzle to a Latin nation, and the Italians betray their bewilderment in the half-amused, half-angry fashion in which they speak about us. "Only a dog and an Englishman walk in the sun," they say. They will elaborate for hours the bonds of sentiment which unite Britain and Italy, so that you would think it was a British, not a French, Army which had won Magenta and Solferino; and then over a question of a few barren acres in East Africa, a trumpery oasis on the Egyptian frontier, or the presence of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean, they will exclaim that of course the fundamental policy of Britain is anti-Italian, and hold up to scorn the meanness of a great power which denies its due to the nation which taught it to be civilized.

The French are detested in Italy, because they treat the Italians like dogs, and never trouble to conceal their absolute contempt for them, nor their unfailing opinion that most Italians are bandits and dirty hounds. This mutual antipathy crops out in all sorts of ways; for example, the rather undignified wrangle as to whether it was Cadorna and his Italians or Foch and the Allied Army Corps which stopped the Austrian on the Piave in 1917. Many attempts have been made to conclude a Franco-Italian Entente, and, as an instance of mental aberration, the proposal solemnly made in an Italian paper to exchange French raw materials for Italian labour remains unsurpassed. But the characters and the ambitions of the two peoples clash too fundamentally to allow of any real rapprochement.

The Germans are not popular either, although, before the war, they were deeply respected because of their organizing powers, which had been particularly displayed with amazing results in Northern Italy. To-day they are not unpopular on account of any survival of the war hatred, for to the Italians the war was fought against Austria, the hereditary enemy, and not against Germany. Their unpopularity is due partly to the fact that so intensely nationalist a country as

Italy has a natural bias against all foreigners, and particularly against those whose existence in its midst is most obvious. Partly, also, the Italians have been disgusted by the flaunted wealth of the German tourists, who have descended by legions into the most expensive spots during the last two years. But, on the whole, I am inclined to think that this dislike of the German, though it is avowed by nearly every Italian, is largely adopted in order to please an Englishman, who is supposed to hate the ex-enemy nations, and that in fact the Germans are as welcome as any other foreigner.

The last nation whose representatives are seen in any quantity in Italy are the Americans. They are recognized as the masters of wealth and exploited as much as possible. I have seen an Italian shopkeeper charge, without a blush, two hundred lire to an American lady for a shawl the replica of which I had just purchased for one hundred. In the first flush of a visit to the Old World it is perhaps natural that Americans should be led away, by their very refreshing enthusiasm, to buy, to buy, and yet again to buy. But, in no nasty spirit, be it understood, I say that they have spoiled Europe for the European, and the effect of their dealings has removed prices from the control of the law of supply and demand. It is, of course, a long way to New York, and it is nice to display the spoils of Europe to admiring friends ; and if you have the money, why not spend it ? But I confess that the type which crosses places visited off the list, which excites itself on the eve of arrival in Florence solely upon the point of whether the city will contain a good hotel, and remarks on being shown over it in the afternoon that it had been shown a very similar place that morning which the guide has called Firenze, ceases to amuse after a time. They ought to have courses in at least elementary geography and history in the States before loosing the genus tourist upon us ; and the thousands of cultured and charming Americans who come over would themselves be the first to urge their institution.

I do not know whether it is more pathetic or annoying to

stand in the Piazza del Popolo and watch the chars-à-bancs with their gleaming rows of tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles swinging from side to side rhythmically in response to the incantations of a guide, lurching heavily out of the Via Ripetta, booming at top speed round the obelisk, and disappearing down the Via del Babuino without an instant's pause ; or to take post upon the coast road between Sorrento and Amalfi, say where the road swings round the gorge of Furore, a savage place, like the Valley of Bones in Ezekiel, and watch the succession of labouring cars, each with its cargo of similar enormous spectacles, covering (mercifully perhaps) faces different, and yet all the same, between middle and old age, grey, blank, smileless, hardly attempting to pierce the dust-clouds of the preceding car ; dazed and numbed with travelling—aye, travelling. Well ! Well ! I dare say we look just the same to them in their country.

There are certain peculiarities in the costumes of foreigners which always excite the vivid comments of the Italian, and this applies especially to headgear. Heaven knows what they would say to Mr. Churchill, for even the modest author when he appears in public in a common and (though he says it himself) perfectly fitting bowler, is greeted with knowing winks and whispers of " Alla Bomba." This expression is not due to the fact that a bowler resembles the half of a Mills' grenade. For some extraordinary reason it is supposed to be the insignia of a young and not too moral man when he is about to paint the town red. " Alla Bomba " means " He's off on the spree," though heaven knows where in Rome he would find a spree to go off on. The top hat is still considered the finest joke in the world, in spite of the fact that Signor Mussolini has taken to one for State occasions. If the ordinary individual appears in one, however, he is at once the head of a large and enthusiastic band of ragamuffins, cheering, laughing, and pointing out to one another this ludicrous marvel. Amusement generally gives way to contempt that anyone could be so silly, and the victim disappears to howls of " Stupido Tedesco ! " (" Fool of a German ! "). Why a top-hat should be considered to be the affectation of Germans

I do not know, but I have a secret longing to agree with the Roman gamin's verdict that it is a fool's hat. It has just one use in Rome—that all functionaries stand in inexplicable awe of it, and it will pass its wearer through any cordon and into any meeting without question.

It is estimated that the foreign tourists in Italy spend in the neighbourhood of twenty million pounds sterling every year, and though the greater part of this sum is, of course, consumed by their living expenses, a considerable portion is devoted to the buying of goods. There are many articles to be bought in Italy of excellent quality and at a price well below that which would have to be paid in England ; and, at the risk of being thought unpatriotic, I will detail some of them. The shoes, both men's and women's, are first class, of fine workmanship and materials. They should be ordered to measure and will cost at the best maker's in Rome between 250 and 300 lire, or £2 10s. and £3 of our money. At a lesser maker's a pair should cost 160 lire, or £1 10s. only. Shirts, also made to measure, are an excellent investment at from 80 lire a piece for poplin to 140 for silk. Other clothes should not be bought in Italy for they are either imported or of inferior quality. Really good silks, crêpe maroccain, or, cloth fabrics are quite as dear as elsewhere. The linen is however, cheap and excellent, the finest Monza being as fine as any in the world, and is good value if bought for sheets, towels, etc.

Among articles of luxury, the best known are the Roman silk goods, which are sold as shawls, bags, cushion covers, etc. They are very attractive in the Italian climate and are in complete harmony with baroque architecture. The piece is made up of broad and narrow bands of the vividest colours, reds, greens, and blues predominating, usually upon a ground of red or black. The scarves, however, do not suit foreign women, nor a foreign climate, for they need a shining, dark, opulent beauty and a brilliant sun to produce their full effect. But they are excellent for cushion covers, and it is more economical to buy a scarf and cut it up than to purchase the squares made specially for cushions. These remarks do

not, of course, apply to one-coloured fringed scarves, which are Venetian rather than Roman. These last are exquisite, but should be most carefully chosen, with a special regard to the fringe, which should contain at least twelve parallel rows of knots. The prices vary according to quality; but for a really thick silk Roman scarf a fair charge is 100 to 120 lire, and for a fringed scarf of double width 180 to 200. A convenient way to estimate prices in British money is to reckon 5 lire to a shilling, or 100 lire to the pound sterling, or in French money to subtract one-quarter from the price in lire in order to arrive at the cost in francs.

The visitor will find a goodly display of amber and tortoiseshell in the Italian shops. As regards the former, it is usually very dear; and if it is desired to buy a good amber necklace it is best to search until a second-hand one, such as is frequently entrusted by its owner to a shop for sale, is found. A necklace of fifty or sixty sized beads should cost from 900 to 1,000 lire. Italian tortoiseshell is sniffed at by the connoisseurs, but that is usually only because, in London, at least, the shops are stocked with Indian shell; and, if properly cared for, the Italian article is perfectly sound in appearance and quality. The pale is dearer than the dark by half as much again, but both are best and cheapest in the South. Tortoiseshell is very dangerous to buy unless you have a "feel" for the genuine article, for there is a great amount of imitation stuff, and the only real test is to put a match to it. This ordeal by fire is even more effective than the judicial process of the Middle Ages, for the false invariably flames up, whereas the true does not even smoulder. The threat to try the test upon the article which the shopkeeper is offering is generally enough; for if he agrees you may be sure that it is genuine; if he refuses, that it is false. So many articles exist in tortoiseshell that it is hopeless to give prices. But it may serve as some indication to say that a pair of handled brushes should cost from 150 to 250 lire, a big cigarette case about 150, and a hand mirror the same. In the case of brushes, a sound tip is to examine them to see whether the bristles are fixed in the shell itself or in a wooden

slab which is glued to the shell. The latter type is much inferior.

The glass of Venice is famous all over the world. Glass is always a matter of individual taste, and there are many for whom the particular *genre* of Venetian glass has an appeal which does not reach me personally. But there are certainly fine shapes in vases and table services which recent developments in the industry have put upon the market, and there is a depôt in the Via del Babuino where a good selection is offered. The most attractive are the big vases in green or red, most gracefully shaped, and the shallow bowls filled with coloured fruits. The finest qualities have generally one or more slight flaws or bubbles, which are supposed to be the hall-mark of perfect manufacture. This glass is not cheap, and needs special surroundings to look effective on a table; but the purchaser may rely on the honesty of the makers and on the fact that what they buy will ultimately arrive in England, though generally after a delay of a couple of months; for each order is executed at the factory, and it need occasion no alarm that the Roman shop will not allow the actual pieces chosen to be taken away.

Next to glass comes pottery, and the most delightful things to be purchased in Rome are the pots and bowls of glazed earthenware, majolica, and faience, which may be found in the Via Due Macelli or, preferably, the Via Condotti. A number of these bowls filled with early tulips or hyacinths are a lovely decoration for almost any style of room, and even when empty they are always attractive for their shape and the charming blending of their colours.

Two other articles in Rome deserve a glance. The first is the so-called Turkish shawls, which are rare and old, for they are acquired only from the neighbouring peasantry, and generally bear traces of rough usage. They make fine bedspreads, and the reds, greens, blues, and blacks which compose their intricate pattern are less garish than those usually found in Italian products, so that they are not out of place in a northern climate. A fair price in a shop for one of these shawls is 250 to 270 lire, and they may be found in many of

the antique shops of the city, hidden away under piles of the brocaded velvets which are supposed to appeal to foreigners, and are generally offered as old ecclesiastical vestments or altar-cloths. Nearly all that are genuine, however, of these last have long since disappeared, and it is better to search the markets and auctions if you desire a good piece of old velvet.

Stamped leather goods are also excellent in Italy. The ordinary purses, bags, book bindings, blotters, etc., are Viennese, but the native product, doubtless originally copied from these models, is simpler and more attractive. A variety of articles are excellently made in a small workshop just behind Santa Maria Maggiore, run by disabled soldiers. It is very difficult to find; but, once there, you may order your fancy from a number of designs in good taste and at wonderfully low cost.

Furniture is as vexed a question in Italy as elsewhere, and genuine stuff as hard to find. I cannot go into the details of the various styles and types which may be encountered, for I have neither the knowledge nor the space required. But an occasional good piece may be picked up in the small shops down by the Tiber embankment. There are some interesting relics of the Spanish predominance in the shape of heavily carved leather-backed chairs and weighty chests; and a very few examples of native work in bureaus, writing decks, and wardrobes. Much of it—particularly the Sicilian stuff—is veneer, and may be recognized by the peculiar patterns of lighter inlaid into darker wood.

The process of buying anything in Italy demands, as I have already said, a technique of its own. Frankly, it is best to persuade an Italian friend to accompany one, take him to the window of the shop, point out the article desired, and either to stay outside while he buys it, or, if one goes in, to keep one's mouth firmly shut. For the commercial maxim of "small profits, quick returns" has not penetrated to Italy, and selling is still conducted on the principle of opening the mouth extremely wide in the first instance, in the hope that after an hour's bargaining the jaws will still be far enough apart to swallow a gain of fifty per cent.

Many shops have the legend "Pressi fissi" ("Fixed prices") which means that the ritual of bargaining is not allowed; but in most of such shops, and in all the others, it is practised daily and incessantly. If, therefore, you are unfortunate enough to have to shop by yourself, are betrayed by your foreign accent, and are subject to the usual male inability to enter a shop without buying something, you will spend a lot of money and still more time in order to acquire many things which you do not want, including a headache and a bad temper. For you are simply not respected if you pay the price asked: even the shopman will consider you a fool, and you must be ready to display by face, voice, and gesture the whole gamut of human emotions from fervid indignation to contemptuous amusement. I admit that it is difficult for a mere man to walk out of a shop with every appearance of resentment against the charming lady who has served, or attempted to serve, him. But it must be done, and you may be sure that some fat *padrone* has been lurking in the background during the chaffering, who will probably waddle or dash (according to his figure) after you on to the pavement, with the offer of an *ultimo prezzo* which will not be very far from what you are willing to pay. Even if this does not occur, on the supposition that you really want the article in question, you may return to the shop on some subsequent day without loss of dignity and go through the process again until it does. But shopping in Italy is a wearing business after the first amusement has evaporated.

In justice to the shop-people, however, it should be said that they are invariably polite, attentive, and helpful, and are the victims, not of their own character, but of a pernicious system. They are of two types—the one, would-be modern, bustling, busy, pressing; the other, the true Roman, smiling, somnolent, happy-go-lucky. But neither the one nor the other varies when it comes to business; and the gentleman who shuts his shop in the evening and walks briskly home, together with the comfortable bourgeois who does not shut his at all, but drags a chair out on to the street, and there

sits until bedtime, are equally incapable of breaking away from a tradition which survives from the time when customers and sales were few, and when, unless a man made a big profit on each individual transaction, he ran the risk of starving to death.

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

ON THE NORTHERN PLAIN

ITALY, at least for the present, is mainly an agricultural country, and the reputation of her peasantry for the qualities which make a nation is not exaggerated. Their political views and methods, though hardly conscientious to our way of thinking, are readily incidental. They but follow the line of least resistance, because it is that which will occasion the least interference with their work. Who shall blame them if they sometimes listen to the voice of a charmer, when he holds out to them visions of satisfying their land-hunger or of assuring them that the stern conflict they wage with some of the poorest soil in Europe shall be fought on slightly less unequal terms? If their own valuation of their political wisdom is but too frequently belied by the nature of the causes they are induced to espouse; if they are, politically speaking, all things to all men—it does not follow that they lack either intelligence or courage. "Sa piu il Papa ed un contadino che il Papa solo" ("The Pope and a peasant are wiser than the Pope alone") is the saying which summarizes the practical talents of the Italian countryman. And as for courage, the annual emigrations of the peasant to countries "he knows not, neither understands he what they say," but wherein he almost invariably makes good, are the best proof that he possesses this quality to an unusual degree.

These peasant emigrants are, indeed, Italy's finest export. They carry with them their aptitude for spare living and hard work, and are a credit to the countries to which they go. I know nothing of the Italian emigrant to the United States, except that those whom I saw during the war seemed to have exchanged their native dignity for a veneer of cheerful

vulgarity, and were less attractive than their stay-at-home brothers. But, by common consent, the Italian emigrant has done much for the South American Republics, notably Argentina and Brazil, and the Italian is a valued citizen of those States. It is really only during the last twenty-five years that he has formed the habit of emigrating, under the stress of increasing congestion at home and the attraction of higher wages abroad. In the year 1913 nearly nine hundred thousand Italians thus followed their luck ; and if the number has since declined to an annual figure of three hundred thousand, the fall is due rather to the new immigration laws of the United States than to any diminution in the desires of the Italians to emigrate. This habit has an immense repercussion upon the Italian country-side ; for though the majority of the emigrants make themselves permanent homes in the foreign countries of their choice, all keep up relations with their homes in Italy, and the total of their remittances reaches annually a fantastic figure. There are also very many who go abroad with the deliberate intention of returning as soon as they have made a bit of money. They then invest their savings in a plot of land, and end life, as they began it, as Italian cultivators.

For nearly a year I was stationed in a succession of small villages in the North of Italy, and though it was wartime it is possible that the state of tension in which the people were living merely served to bring out more clearly their true character ; and perhaps the best way to define that character is to describe the sort of life one lived with them.

The village where I spent the greater part of the time out of the trenches was itself a straggling collection of houses built at irregular intervals on either side of a straight metalled road, with a thicker clump where this road was crossed by another secondary highway. Here was also a paved patch used for the holding of the weekly market, flanked on one side by an enormous church, as incongruous [1] as the huge cathedrals which exist in many of the tiniest villages of our

[1] The explanation of this incongruity is supposed to be that before the plagues of the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries the population was very much larger.

own eastern counties. On Sundays the whole population came to the mellow sound of the church bell, and stood about in the tiny piazza, or on the flight of stone steps worn into hollows by the feet of their ancestors. Nearly all, the women included, were in black, and, by a strange inversion of the costumes of the sexes it was the men who wore huge-brimmed hats of black felt, pulled down over their eyes, and long cloaks of smooth black broadcloth, a fold of which was wrapped round the left arm and held well up under the chin, as a coquette used to carry her muff in the days when muffs were fashionable. The old stagers were content with square-toed boots of a rusty black ; but the dudes were never satisfied until they had completed their Sunday dress with a pair of a yellow which positively screamed.

The women wore no hats at all, but hid their hair, as sleek and shiny as the *coiffure* of Peg the famous companion of Golliwog, beneath a thick woollen shawl, which was draped round the shoulders and crossed in front over the bodice. They did honour to the Sabbath by putting on an additional petticoat beneath a voluminous skirt and by wearing a pair of thin woollen or cotton stockings, terminating in a pair of black shoes, with heels so high and narrow that to walk on them at all needed a miracle of balance ; for during the rest of the week the wearers had certainly been clattering about with bare feet encased in wooden clogs devoid of any heel at all. The grown-ups kept themselves to themselves in groups, silently staring at the British soldiers, as, no doubt, their ancestors stared at the Goths of Alaric. But this reserve concealed a wealth of hidden excitement, which was sometimes too much for the weaker sex. Then, for a moment or two, the female section of the crowd would break into a ripple of comment, and become an agitated sea of bobbing heads and pointing fingers before sinking back again into the calm from which their men-folk had never departed. Around these black rocks broke a tide of children in the seventh heaven of delight, restrained neither by a sense of the national dignity nor the reserve due to Sunday. Occasionally a maternal or paternal arm emerged from shawl or cloak and

cuffed shrill chatter into shriller whimpering. The scene ended when the old, white-haired priest passed through the crowd, unruffled and indifferent, with his eyes cast down and his lips moving. He went into the church, and his flock melted in after him, leaving the piazza to the dogs scratching in the sunlight.

The houses were all of one type, high and red, with pointed roofs, sinking on one side to a flat loft raised on posts some ten feet from the ground, and reached by a ladder as twisty and rickety as though it had emerged from a Rackham drawing. Here was stored hay, straw, and the inhabitants thereof, increased by such hens as had the agility to flutter up. Below was the winter supply of wood, every scrap of it precious, down to the veriest twig. In the yard of stamped earth between the house and the road a few more fowls scratched hopelessly at the almost polished surface, or took the curious bath of their kind in the dust-heaps at the corners. Up the front of the house were trained vines, whose trailers rioted over the trellis-work roofing in a part of the yard; and a wisteria hid the gnarled indecency of its branches with a mass of delicate green foliage and bobbins of mauve blossom. One or two decrepit chairs, a rough bench, and a table, barely recognizable as such beneath its layers of dust, dirt, and wine-stains completed the furniture of the outside dining-room, whose roof was the trellis; and the whole property was rounded off by a low wall with a gate of open-work iron, invariably off its hinges.

The inhabitants of my particular house were an old lady and her two daughters. The dame was podgy and hairy, and rejoiced in the name of "Gasperini." She was at once rechristened, by a subtle anacolouthon, "Mother Gold Flake," and was a comfortable soul, given to lapses into melancholy before this invasion of barbarians, but generally treating them with a slightly astonished tolerance. In the evening she would betake herself to a corner of the wide, open hearth in the kitchen, and indulge in portentous noddings of the head, punctuated by exclamations of "Ma!" at irregular intervals. The daughters were the greatest contrast

VILLAGE PEOPLE LEAVING CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNING

imaginable—one a meek little creature trotting ceaselessly about the business of the house, so quiet and timid she seemed afraid to venture far from the walls of any room ; the other, a superb beauty, with huge, flashing eyes of jet black and the carriage of a queen. But all three were good, kind, and brave. I do not know how they lived before the soldiers came, but afterwards the British Army had three more on its ration strength. In return the old lady bestirred herself to perform practical benefits.

In winter the cold on the northern plain is intense and a meagre fire is kept burning all day upon the hearth. A first ration of twigs is allotted, and lighted on the low iron dogs. The twigs sink to a glowing mass, and the morning's cooking is done. It consists chiefly of a paste of maize flour formed into big, round cakes, which are grilled slowly until they become the famous *polenta*. A more unsavoury dish it is difficult to imagine, but it is the staple food of the North. The glowing handful of twigs is watched until it shrinks to a mere spark before a further handful is added and blown into flame with a pair of huge brass and leather bellows. The last thing at night the hot ashes (as much of them as is hot) are scraped into a terra-cotta bowl and borne away for a purpose which remained a mystery until one never-to-be-forgotten night when the old lady showed her appreciation of the day's beef ration by an act of kindness which nearly frightened me to death.

On retiring to my room, I observed that my bed had grotesquely swollen, and looked like a dog which has been for a week in the river. In the flickering light of my candle I could make out something black and shiny lying on the pillow, and for a moment had the wild idea that a snake had swallowed the local pig and chosen my bed in which to complete the process of digestion. Remembering that I was a British soldier in a foreign land, I summoned up all my courage to approach the bed. The thing on the pillow became a polished stick. Some practical joke, of course by those fools of subalterns for which they would be properly told off in the morning. I was tired and bitterly cold, and in no mood for

humour, so I flung back the bedclothes with a vicious jerk. A sweet, aromatic scent, warm and comforting, floated out, and told me that kindness, not malice, had been at work. The bulge was a wicker frame placed over a terra-cotta pot half full of still warm ashes, which had been thrust down into the bed by means of a wooden handle. The sheets were fragrant with the smell of burnt vine twigs, and brought comfort and blessed relief from the cold to tired limbs.

The people of the house were suffering cruelly from the high prices and scarcity produced by the war. Sometimes I would be invited, in virtue of my few words of Italian, to pay a state visit to the *signora*, and to hear the flood of her sorrows, about half of which I understood. But this was in the evening, when the frost was cracking the ground outside and the cold was sneaking in through every crack and penetrating to old bones, protected though they were by several coverings of close-knit Italian wool. In the daytime, when the sun turned the whole country-side to gold and silver, when the road was a sounding drum to shod feet, and when the narrow fields between the vine hedges rang to the hoofs of the cavalry at exercise, it was impossible to be depressed or to feel that God was not good. Even the war was confined to the sullen booming of cannon up beyond Bassano in the grim mountains to the north. The three women were always, even in their saddest moments, an object-lesson to the defeatist. They never doubted that "the stranger would not pass." Only once were they afraid, when, on a night of brilliant moonlight, some Austrian planes came over to bomb Treviso, and the sky was full of the fire of bursting shrapnel. Then it was a time of little shrieks, "Ah, Dio mio! Che colpo!" "Maria Virgine!" "Che brutta guerra!" from an audience which, for all its qualms, never left the window whence the fireworks could be best seen.

Other memories come back to me of that time when the old order was passing. The discovery of a flock of turkeys, purchased for five lire apiece for a hungry company which had outstripped its commissariat. That was in the foothills near Isola della Scala. But it was at Stroppari, the village where

we stayed so long with "Mother Gold Flake" that occurred the famous hunting for the Christmas dinner. Passing one day, about a week before the 25th December by a little farm not a mile from our billet, I observed ten fat little porkers drinking from the stream which gurgled by the roadside. Half an hour later the whole company stood to attention in a double sense outside, while I went in to chaffer with the owner. The bargain was soon struck, a fatigue squad was fallen out, and the command given to break ranks and chase pig. We returned to billets with a band of our own at the head of the column, composed of ten grinning privates each bearing under his arm a squealing pig of four months' growth, each pig announcing to heaven in a different key his sense of the indignity of thus returning to the nursery stage. Those pigs were very good, but they avenged only too well their premature demise. There is no surviving member of "C" Company to-day who does not know the effects on the human body of an overdose of fresh pork.

Then there was the day when the battalion was billeted in a magnificent Renaissance palace, adorned with fine frescoes and the presence of its châtelaine, a young and charming *contessa*. The officers were duly invited to take coffee with her after dinner, and at first the proceedings were conducted with immense ceremony. Twenty-five gentlemen sat round in a stiff circle on high-backed Louis XVI chairs round one little lady ensconced on an immense sofa. The lady, completely at her ease, conversed unbrokenly to all and sundry, and twenty-five heads nodded comprehendingly at the incomprehensible, twenty-five mouths hissed "Si, Si" at intervals. I was no wiser than the rest, but kept up my reputation as a linguist by an occasional daring "Non, Non." All this transpired in the midst of a portentous gravity which would have done honour to a body of Scotch elders met to count the plate. It was finally too much for the lady's sense of humour. She was particularly intrigued by the presence of our *padre*, a worthy man, who, by adding "o's" and "a's" to his native Welsh dialect, had convinced himself that he had found the secret of speaking Italian, when, as a

matter of fact, he had merely invented an entirely new language of which he was the sole living exponent. It tickled the lady to know that she was in the presence of a priest, and with a somewhat malicious twinkle she began to question him as to his experiences in Italy. "Troppo pulce, non è vero?" she concluded. "Whatta?" answered the *padre*, according to his usual formula. "Pulce, pulce!" exclaimed the lady, exposing a quantity of black silk stocking, and scratching vigorously in demonstration of her meaning. The struggle between modesty and courtesy in the *padre's* expression was so ludicrous that it dissolved all ice, and the rest of the evening was full of laughter, if not of comprehension.

These memories of wartime Italy are a patchwork of little pictures of all types and conditions of men and things. Mostly the setting is the high causeway of a road running straight between two deep ditches on to a huddle of tall red houses, very like a typical bit of our own Fen country. On either side are neat little fields edged with elms, cut down to mere stubs, their branches trained sideways to support the *Vite maritali*, the "married vines," so-called because they wrap the elm branches round with a tender embrace. Sometimes there is an isolated group of tall poplars or cypresses. Sometimes a number of fields will be covered with a film of water for the growing of rice; and elsewhere the water will be shepherded into a thousand irrigation channels. Here and there stand little beehive-shaped stacks of hay, each impaled upon a long stake. When a stack is in use it presents the macabre appearance of a chewed leg-of-mutton set up on end. The tall stalks of the maize plants shoot heavenwards the red pokers of their grain, all ready to be picked and plucked, and the husks used for fuel. The country has an indescribable air of having been cultivated from the beginning of time, and of having not even yet grown tired of it. It is so neat and tidy, like a well-brushed head of hair. The people also have the appearance of having always lived there, partly, I think, because of the ponderous lethargy of the working oxen, which lurch, like dirty white sacks, across the

red ploughs, or draw the long, rough carts along the roads with a gait such as one sees only in retarded cinema films. Nothing could ever hurry them, and it is hard to explain how they ever arrive anywhere.

Of course, the land is not all like this garden valley of the Po. Farther north are the foothills, with their occasional fruit orchards and long sweeps of glorious pasture. The feel of sinking my body into the velvet grass and my teeth into a succession of dead ripe oranges after a hot march down from Asiago is with me yet. Beyond the pastures again are the great pine forests reaching up to the snows; and in the late spring the scanty earth about the pine roots is rich with strawberries, small but succulent. Farther south are the sterile scarps of the Apennines, great slabs of rock crumbled by the frosts and suns of centuries, savage spots where one can well imagine the "woman wailing for her demon lover." Then comes the richer but still too dry plain of Tuscany. Then the arid Roman Campagna, with the filthy untidiness of a disused brush which has lost half its bristles, a desolation of humps covering the ruins of villas and forts, and covered by a sparse and weedy grass that, even in winter, seems stricken by the same fever which has driven mankind away. There is good land, however, close by, in the volcanic soil of the Alban and Sabine Hills; and as you journey up to them you pass a quite definite and sudden line between feeble and forcible growth. Here, too, there are forests of beech, larch, and elm.

The southern provinces have the air of having once been rich, but since used up. The olive always gives an appearance of exhaustion to any land where it displays its lifeless leaves and wrinkled body; and the olive is queen of large stretches of this country. There are wondrous luxuriant patches, such as the orange groves of Sorrento and parts of the old plain of Capua; and the vine, fig, and olive have been inserted wherever there is a handful of earth, even in the less favoured spots. But it is a hard land for all its sun; and its fruits are typical of it. There are some which one expects to be dry, such as nuts and figs; but here even the peaches and nec-

tarines, though sweet, are almost juiceless. It takes the thicker skin of the orange and the melon to keep out that sucking heat. This in the milder west; but in the east the primitive land of Calabria is a shimmering horror in the summer. Sicily at its fringes is glorious and luxuriant, but inland on the sulphur beds it is savage and terrible as a dead world.

The visitor should remember that he sees Italy in the greenest times of the year when she is young again, when the rains have smoothed out the heat wrinkles on her face, and when a temperate sun nourishes, instead of blasting, her flowers and fruits. But both before and after these fairy months she has a season when she is a tired hag, with the paint on her cheeks rising in blisters, and she writhes beneath a torturing fire. Many who have been to Italy have experienced the unpleasant effects of the *sirocco*, that hot, gusty wind which brings with it sick headaches, bad temper, and a general sense of depression and age. But the *sirocco* is preferable to the still heat which melts the body like wax during the late summer; for though it is a bad wind it is at least wind, and one can move without dripping. But these reflections are becoming too like a conversation in an Italian *salon*, where the *sirocco* is a never-failing resource against conversational drought, and I must proceed to my task of describing the life, habits, and occupations of those who live in the Italian country.

CHAPTER II

VILLEGIATURA

THE modern State consists of two classes of people—countryfolk who wish they lived in the towns, and townsfolk who wish they lived in the country; and one of its chief difficulties arises from the fact that though the former need no propaganda to make them settle permanently in the towns, the latter are liable to find their enthusiasm for country life evaporate with the arrival of the first shower. There is, however, no immediate need of a "back-to-the-land" campaign in Italy. Industrialism is not yet sufficiently pronounced, and the difference between town and country wages not sufficiently attractive. Perhaps, also, the Italian women, who have never caught the fever of Feminism, do not put the same pressure as the women of other countries upon their lords and masters to be led to the excitements and luxuries of town life. No doubt the usual symptoms of an industrial State will manifest themselves in proportion as the huge schemes of development, such, for example, as that proposed for the port of Venice, become actual facts. But for the moment the great cities do not act as vacuum cleaners upon the countryside, nor suck in its manhood to factory and workshop; and the peasant prefers the hard work he knows to the harder he knows not. There is also a supply of labour in the towns which is adequate without being so great as to cause unemployment.

But there is a strong and recognized pull the other way from town to country, to which every Italian, who can afford it, yields for some portion of the hot summer months. There are some districts which have organized clubs for these excursions, after the manner of Lancashire folk, to which a small, regular contribution throughout the year entitles a person to participate in the advantages of a cheap holiday.

In Cremona, for example, there is on organization, rather similar to the Fresh Air Fortnight Society in Britain, which sends the children of working people for long periods every year to the seaside ; and its existence explains the popularity of the local Fascista firebrand, Signor Farinacci, in spite of his political eccentricities and generally violent views. So prevalent is this habit of summer holidays that a special word has been invented for them, and a person who retires to the country is said to have gone on Villegiatura. Anybody who cannot go is considered quite *démodé*, and from this fact arises the scandalous story which every Italian tells about his neighbour.

It is said that Signor So-and-So has not gone on Villegiatura. But, then, how has Signor So-and-So obtained that lovely tinge of sunburn ? He himself claims to have had an enjoyable fortnight at Viareggio, but nobody has seen him there. Then some kind friend discovers by a discreet questioning of the Signor's butcher and grocer that, just before he was supposed to have gone away, a mysterious order for a fortnight's supplies to be brought at early dawn to his house had been given. All is now clear. The *Signor* has merely shut himself up for a fortnight in his house, and exposed every part of his person in turn to the sun on the roof, while he reads every day an account of the doings at Viareggio in the local paper of that spa ; and the sand which he has carelessly shaken out of his pocket, with an exclamation against the discomfort of lying on sea-beaches, has been specially purchased for the purpose of fabricating circumstantial evidence.

The townsfolk who can afford it begin to emigrate about the middle of June, and continue to go in batches until October. There is never any of the agonizing uncertainty about the weather which clouds the prospect of an Englishman's summer holiday, for, as my servant once observed to me when I remarked in July that there might be rain, " The falling of water in summer would be contrary to the will of God." So the townsman betakes himself to the seaside with little more luggage than a pair of bathing drawers, several suits of pyjamas, and a sun hat. At about four o'clock on a summer's

afternoon it is little exaggeration to say that the whole of the fifteen hundred miles of Italy's coast line is black with people, and every sunny cove contains one or more recumbent forms burning themselves fore or aft. Of the many places in Italy where a man can live all day in pyjamas and bedroom slippers, and where the male tendency to dress in all the colours of the rainbow, rigorously repressed by female jealousy for two hundred years, is allowed to run riot, the least pretentious are the best.

Not only are such fashionable spots as the Lido or the chief spas of the Ligurian Riviera more autocratic in the matter of dress, but they are also more expensive, and bear out the cynical definition of a holiday as the period one repents for the rest of the year. The most delightful retreat I know is the stretch of the Tuscan coast north of Viareggio, in one of the groups of houses built among the pine forests which grow right down to the tide limit. The life is quiet and unhampered by the dogmas of etiquette. The people are simple and unspoiled. Living is good and cheap, for at the best hotel the pension terms are about seventy-five lire per day. The beach is wide, firm, and devoid of those horrible banks of shingle which make walking in shoes a purgatory, and without them a hell. Finally the bathing is exceedingly good when it is calm, which it usually is. But after a storm, when the great rollers come sweeping in, it is not safe to do anything but join in one of the long lines of people who link hands and advance chain-like into the surf; for there is a fearful back drag, strong enough to pull one off one's feet even when in one's depth.

The best way to bathe is always to take one of the curious rafts, consisting of two floats joined by a plank, and paddle out a few hundred yards. These rafts are most handy. They are easy to dive off, and, what is more important, easy to clamber on to. Moreover, from some distance out the view looking back towards the land is superb. The untidy and dirty-looking semi-permanent wooden huts on the beach are redeemed by the colours of the bathing tents, flapping in the breeze, the bright patches of the sun awnings, and the

active tribe of white- or blue- or red-clad children. Behind is the dark army of the pines, through whose ranks show glimpses of the white or red of buildings. In the distance is the blue-green mass of the hills gashed with the white wounds of the marble quarries ; and over all is the intense blue of the Italian sky. It is always fine and always hot, with a heat never oppressive because of the little wind which blows ceaselessly from off the sea. There is only one danger, namely, that these spots should become too civilized. Already a tram runs along the coast road, and new villas are springing up along the shore ; but for the moment they approach the ideal of being neither too primitive nor too luxurious.

Many Italians prefer the mountains to the sea, and they have some reasons in their favour ; for it is an excellent plan if one is compelled to stay in Rome during part of the hot weather to leave the city early on Saturday, and journey by tram to Rocca di Papa in the Alban Hills. The change in temperature is miraculous. Even in Rome the early morning is always fresh, and if one rises at that hour which every-one agrees to be the best of the day, because hardly anybody has seen it since leaving school, one can pass a whole twenty-four hours without drawing a lungful of dead air. The last part of the ascent, which rises to two thousand feet, is made by a stubby tram, and a still stubbier funicula, and one is shot out on to the landing-stage of Rocca di Papa about 9.30.

A few hours may be spent in lazing in the woods before climbing up the heavily timbered slopes of Monte Cavo. The path lies first through the unsavoury slums of the village, then by a track of the kind that makes one marvel at the uncanny surefootedness of the beasts who use it, and finally by a regular Roman Triumphal Way, paved with huge flat stones, upon which the brushwood has encroached, but which still remains a noble, stately road. It is said to have been built by generals who were disappointed of their triumph in Rome itself, and who made it in order to be able to have a little private triumph of their own. It runs up to the monastery and church perched on the very summit. The monastery has been turned into a rough hotel, but the church

remains wedged between the bar and the hotel entrance, a monument to the English Royal Cardinal of York, brother of the Young Pretender, who has left the record of his restorations in two inscriptions just within and on either side of the door. Outside there is a small plateau shaded by a gigantic tree, where a glass of beer may be profitably consumed after the climb, cheek by jowl with the remains of a wall of mighty stone blocks. In the evening one may descend, eat largely at the excellent hotel in Rocca di Papa, and either sleep there the night or walk the ten kilometres into Frascati in the flush of the setting sun, and there take a tram back to the mosquitoes of Rome.

But the Alban Hills are mere molehills of mountains. The real mountain country lies eastwards in the savage Abruzzi, or north on the fringe of the Alps. The former is a wild country, full of old hill towns and villages, which do not expect the visitor, even in summer, and where one is rapturously greeted by one's old friends the bugs. It is not so bad as Albania, where the feet of the beds are placed in kerosene tins, but the visitor is subject none the less to a heavy, indirect fire from the roof. It is, however, bad enough until one becomes salted, and the Abruzzi villages are not to be recommended as holiday resorts, save for the larger places, such as Rieti, Aquila, or Teramo. Generations of holiday-makers have, however, made the slopes of the Alps ideal resting-places, and the Italian side, at least to one who considers the climbing of snow peaks a particularly acute form of madness, is even more attractive than the Swiss or Austrian. The environs of Lake Como are a favourite resort of the Milanese, and many motor to and from their offices every day. Many from all parts of Italy go to Cortina d'Ampezzo, or the upper reaches of the Brenta and the Adige. It is impossible to pick out the best among so many pearls ; but there is one drawback to an Alpine holiday, namely, that one is liable to lose the typically Italian weather. There are cold winds in the high places, and even rains.

I have said nothing of the winter resorts, for the Italians do not take their holidays in winter. They leave that to

visitors from less favoured climes. Personally, I have never been able to understand why people in winter should leave a country where everything is organized against the cold and come to a country where everything is organized against the heat, but where, during four months, the rain rains harder and the frost freezes sharper. This migration to the South in search of warmth is a superstition which either mankind has caught from observing the stupid habits of birds or has deliberately invented in order to make jealous those who are compelled to stay at home in the North. It may be similarly observed that the swimmer in the icy water of an English river always loudly expresses his delicious sensations to those wise enough to stay on the brink. For myself, I always recognize the fact that I am travelling South from the rise of that uneasy desire for thicker coverings which differentiates dozing from sleep. I have driven into Burgos on the 8th of June in a blinding snowstorm; I have been soaked to the skin three days in succession in summer in the Moroccan "desert"; and I shudder to think what those places must be like in winter. In Italy it is really hot in summer; but in winter the glow of comfort given by a huge stove is lost in the Arctic waste of an immense room. I remember at one Roman dinner party it was so cold that the guests asked and obtained permission to wear their overcoats—all save one hardy person who expressed his contempt by recounting an anecdote of Terra del Fuego. "When I was there in such-and-such a year," he observed, with the lordly air of the much travelled, "I used to see the snow falling and melting on the naked bodies of Indian babies, and I often wondered what they would do in this climate." "That's simple," retorted another guest. "They would die of cold!"

The illusion, however, that the South is warm still persists, and is fostered by the medical profession, who send their unhappy patients to shiver a thousand miles from their comfortable firesides. Italy is a favourite prison of these deluded wretches who may be seen snuffling in greatcoats and under umbrellas beneath the streaming skies of Capri or Rapallo or Taormina. I admit that there is some exaggera-

tion about this description, because when it rains it does not actually freeze, and when it freezes it is usually a dry cold. And October is nearly always a lovely month, productive of a false spring, when the browns become green for a space before dying again. April, too, in Italy, explains why Browning perpetrated his remarks about April in England, for it is, indeed, a month of careless rapture, not only of the blackbird, but of all things living. The Italian thus gains two months on an English winter; but for the rest, it is a sober fact that there is not much difference between the two.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTADINO AND HIS LIFE

THE peasantry in Italy vary very much in appearance and character, with much the same differences as exist between the dour Picard and the sparkling Provençal in France. But here the differences are even more local, and may be observed as between two villages a few miles apart. An attractive theory which may account for this phenomenon is that the inhabitants of different villages are descended from the different nations which, from time to time, have invaded Italy, and in support of this hypothesis may be urged the continued existence of villages speaking their own language in conclusive proof of a non-Italian descent.

It is certainly true that the cultivator of the plains shows a complicated mixture of races. But the peasant of the hill fastnesses has probably always been too poor to excite the greed or fury of the invader. No doubt he was thoroughly fleeced by Hannibal's foraging parties, when the great Carthaginian watched sullenly from the Alban Hills the hated city he could not take. No doubt, in other cases, he is descended from the slaves of the noble owners of Roman villas, who fled when their masters' property went up in flames. No doubt he was requisitioned later still to fight the battles of local Italian barons. But he remains, through all vicissitudes, a type distinct and apart, which is best described in its own summary of its character, "Scarpe grosse e cervello fino" ("Thick boots, shrewd head"). He watches with a faint scorn the motor-cars rush past where once the chariots rolled. He observes without interest the monastery and the restaurant replace the castle and the villa. These are not for him, and are not his business. The motor-bus which has just begun to connect the outlying villages with the railway he uses because he sees its advantages. But when he steps out of it

PEASANTS OF THE CAMPAGNA PLOUGHING

he yokes his pair of bullocks or working cows to the old Roman wooden plough, shod with iron, with which his ancestors have turned the soil for two thousand years.

The best way to see the *contadino* is to go very early in the morning to the Porta San Sebastiano or the Porta San Giovanni in Laterano, and watch the procession of high-wheeled, gaudy hooded carts bringing in corn, wine, oil, and vegetables from the country. The master reclines in majestic somnolence on the high seat, from which the hood has been pressed back like a shut concertina. Dress is not his foible, and he reserves his decorative instincts for the cart itself. The outside of the hood is plain and serviceable, but inside there is usually an elaborate sky of brilliant blue flecked with golden stars. The bars of the upper structure are also painted in vivid blue and red, and the panels of the body with a more intricate design of corn sheaves, hunting dogs, vine leaves, or other insignia of the country. The horse's harness is of bright red leather, and the collar is surmounted by a triangular yoke of oxidized metal, hung along the edges with little tinkling bells. Sometimes a tuft of coloured hair is suspended from the martingale underneath the horse's chin.

The cart, which is ten or twelve feet long, is loaded to its utmost capacity with farm produce, on top of which are scattered various members of the family. Two old people are the master's parents, who later will make their rheumatic way up the Scala Santa, and thereby gain the remission of some weeks of purgatory. The small boy is his son, agog with excitement, and uttering shrill cries of encouragement to the staggering beast which drags the cart. He brandishes pridefully a new whip of twisted yellow withies with a fine red handle. The company is completed by a yapping and ferocious cur, running furiously from end to end of the cart over men and things, to bark defiance at his friend the enemy in a neighbouring vehicle. He is of more than uncertain breed, but is known by the generic name of *lupetto*, or, " little wolf," and possesses a sharp-pointed muzzle, two pricked ears, and a curly black and white coat. Whoever else may be absent from the cargo, he is always there, and always

yapping. It is his task to defend the cart from thieves while his master argues in the municipal Customs House or slakes his thirst in a wayside *osteria*; and, to judge by the way he wrinkles back his lips over his sharp teeth at an inoffensive stranger, he is fully up to his job.

Once within the city, the *contadino* drives to market, or rather lets his horse take him there. Arrived, he wakes up, and disposes of his produce to the local merchant in charge of one of the booths pitched in a small square or narrow street. He pouches his money in his leather belt, or in his sock, and drives off in his empty, jangling cart to do his shopping. It is now the turn of the dog to sleep, which he does by climbing into the hood and curling himself up in a fold thereof. The great cart jolts and clatters down the lanes of the old quarter, stopping at the necessary shops with the utmost indifference to the complete traffic jamb caused thereby, and some of the finest flowers of the Italian language blossom on the lips of lordly chauffeurs whose limousines are compelled to await the good pleasure of the humble peasant.

But the latter has come to town to buy and sell only, and has no wish to stay there longer than he can help. By the middle of the morning, therefore, he is well outside the walls on his way home. Let us follow him, and take a look at the life of his village.

From early morn the main street is a hive of industry. The first thing to stir is a flock of odorous goats, whose shepherd heralds his approach with a high, long-drawn-out cry. At this signal the front doors fly open, the housewives appear with their cans, and before each the flock is halted for so long as it takes the shepherd to draw the quantity of milk ordered straight from udder to can. This is done to prove the purity of the supply, but it is something akin to the confidence trick, for the evening delivery, which is delivered by the shepherd alone, is seldom of the same consistency as in the morning, and the water drunk by the flock during the day has a singular tendency to pass straight into their milk. From a building at the top of the street begins the sound of a clatter of machinery, and from an iron pipe

MILKING COWS AT THE CUSTOMER'S OWN DOOR

projecting out of the wall jets of steam begin to issue. It is the olive mill, and a string of women and boys wend their way thither to the summons of an asthmatic siren. A party of men armed with long knives slouch mysteriously off in the other direction. They are not bandits off on a throat-cutting expedition, but labourers going to prune the vines. An elderly man with a long, single-barrelled gun slung by a strap on his shoulder and a yellow cur at his heels is the village sportsman.

The bundle of rags stirring and scratching on the church steps is the village beggar, who on one day of the week is allowed to go round and collect scraps of food and a few soldi from the charitable. The fat creature, with the black skull-cap, long brown robe, and sandalled feet is his trade rival, the mendicant friar, who trades his prayers for half-pence. He is a rare bird these days, for able-bodied idleness upon even the most venerable excuse, is barely tolerated and scantily supported. The villagers do not care much for religion; and though anti-clericalism is dormant, it has still a concealed existence. There are still, however, a few zealous persons, chiefly among the richer folk, with whom the *curé* has great influence, and therefore his church is full every Sunday; for it is dangerous to offend a man in whose hands may be the keys of heaven and hell, and certainly are the powers to give or prevent the giving of a job.

Two women approach, balancing large and swollen sacks upon their heads, and walking with the magnificent, upright carriage and slow, swaying gait of their kind. They advance with the carelessness of a free conscience, but as a matter of fact they have been engaged in the reprehensible practice of stealing by moonlight fallen acorns and olives to fatten their husbands' pigs, and their carriage is more upright than their conduct. But they may well flaunt their booty unafraid, for nobody will lose a day's work to carry complaint against them to the *prætor* ten miles distant for the pleasure of seeing a lady fined three or four lire a year or two hence.

The village is not, of course, entirely composed of working *contadini*. There are a number of richer men, and, since the

war brought a general increase of prosperity, there are many independent smallholders.[1]

Even before, there were a few whom hard work or a stroke of luck had enriched sufficiently to advance them above their fellows. The origin of these pre-war fortunes was varied and romantic. In the days of the Papal States every village on the Romagnol border had its band of smugglers, who drove a profitable clandestine trade in those troublous times. The Papal administration was notoriously inefficient and its officers were evaded with ridiculous ease.

> " Soldati del Papa," runs the rhyme, " Otto a cavare una rapa
> Senza il Sergente
> Non son' buoni a niente."[2]

Those were also the days of real, live brigands, who passed their lives in robbing the traveller and in conflict with the avenging soldiery. After the unification of Italy the Government had to wage a regular war against these gentry, and it took ten years to extinguish them. They often amassed considerable fortunes, which they buried in a hole in the ground (" the brigand's bank," as the people say) ; and since they were a distrustful tribe, they confided the secret of their hiding-places to no one. It frequently happened that one of these capitalists was killed " with his boots on " before he had had time to unearth his hoard ; and thus it is that to this day from time to time a cache of coins or jewels is turned up by the plough to the enrichment of the fortunate discoverer. The same process of ploughing, or that of trenching in order to make a vineyard, even more frequently reveals some valuable antiquity—a statue, marbles, mosaics, or coins which once belonged to some Roman or Sabine villa ; for the whole country for fifty miles round Rome was thickly dotted with luxurious residences, all of whose valuables did

[1] Compare the fabled farmer's toast, " Here's to a bloody war and a poor harvest." This toast, however, dates from a time before the dispensation of Providence cut down the value of his war profits by three-quarters by means of the unkind trick of monetary depreciation. Still the Italian peasant is definitely better off than in 1914.

[2] " It takes eight of the Pope's soldiers to pull a turnip.
Without the Sergeant, they are good for nothing."

not perish in their sack or decay. Such finds belong to the State, which, however, pays half their estimated value to the finder if it decides to keep them, or half the price realized if sold.

Some of the fortunes of the richer *contadini* are earned by more prosaic means. The baker, for example, can earn a steady livelihood by the process of heating his ovens every day and baking the bread brought to him at so much a loaf. He never makes the bread himself, and he generally only leases his bakery from the Commune. There is also the village doctor, who, until recently, had to give attendance to any member of the Commune who desired it in return for a fixed salary. He was usually a mediocre and unambitious practitioner, who never attempted to deal with any complicated case, and shuffled all that he could on to the hospital in the provincial town. So evident were the evils of this State medical service that a new regulation has been issued which will provide the doctors with some incentive to be up to date and their patients with some hope of being other than an unqualified nuisance. Free attendance will shortly be confined to those on the poor list, and all others will have to pay for the doctor's services. His salary will be drastically reduced, but his area will be extended to cover several Communes, so that he will have enough paying patients to make a living.

There is a good deal of ill-health in the villages, chiefly the result of overcrowding. Until lately it was not uncommon to find four or five persons living in a single room. But the exemption of new houses from taxation for twenty-five years has given a great fillip to the building trade. Many *contadini* are now erecting houses for themselves, a task very much simplified by the excellence and ubiquity of suitable stone. Indeed, I think the overcrowding problem would have been solved long ago but for the persistence of the tradition of the bad old days, when it was sheer suicide to live outside the village, or even in an isolated house. The Italian peasant will live anywhere and in any conditions without much protest, and does, in fact, in many cases live in the most

dreadful hovels. Thus the same village will offer the strangest contrast between poverty and luxury. For example, in the North, and in the Romagna on the right bank of the Tiber, the most wretched huts are all fitted with electric light, which is frequently so cheap that it is burned all day at less cost then would be involved by the installation of switches. This is due to the magnificent water power provided by the rapid Italian rivers. In addition, nearly all villages have now an excellent supply of water laid on in pipes from the higher hills.

The village shops are rare and poorly stocked, for nearly everybody lives on the resources of his own land, eked out by purchases from the towns. The co-operative stores, which are fairly common, are always in a parlous state; for they lack sufficient capital, possess—and can therefore give—very little credit, and are very badly managed. There is not, therefore, the local bourgeoisie which was such a feature of English village life, at least until the adoption of motor-lorries by the multiple shops subjected the village retailers to a crushing competition. What the Socialist would call the "parasite" class is confined, therefore, to the few who are rich enough to live without working, among whom the usurer holds the chief place. His fat times are passing, but until recently he took full advantage of the incessant need of the *contadino* for additional capital to advance him money at ruinous rates of interest. Ten per cent per week was the usual figure. Lured on by these rich possibilities, nearly everyone who has a little money tries his hand at this game; and a favourite method of obtaining land is to lend a sum to the owner and then threaten to foreclose. In this way the borrower is slowly but surely driven to hold a forced sale of his effects, and the lender acquires the land cheap.

It is chiefly to this practice that the existence of so many families who have come down from landowners to hired labourers may be attributed. Particularly unmerited was the fate of those who, fifty or sixty years ago, espoused the cause of Italy against the Pope. They were practically ruined by the Papal Government and forced to sell. Naturally

enough, after the triumph of their cause the new Government could not do anything for them, nor disturb the properly constituted owners of land which had once been theirs.

Last among the " persons of quality " is the schoolmaster, or, to be more generally accurate, the schoolmistress. Each Commune has several elementary schools at which all children between the ages of six and twelve are supposed to attend. In fact, however, many parents keep their children at home to work, and they are perhaps not so foolish as they appear ; for those children who do attend do not appear to profit much by the instruction they receive. Nine out of ten on leaving school read with difficulty, and their writing is unformed and incorrect even to the eye of a foreigner. It is not really the fault of them or of their teacher. The latter is usually a young girl, with a very limited education herself and a most miserable salary, who does her best according to the lights possible to her.

The majority of the schoolrooms are good rooms with plenty of light and air, and not an undue amount of undisturbed dirt, hung round with gaily coloured charts of human and vegetable insides. The furniture is completed by an antique map, and a revolving globe on a stand, or rather a globe which once revolved. The children are kept in good order during class, which says a great deal for the character of the teacher. But illiteracy is very common, and it is quite usual to find that one's cook, for example, even if she can write down the figures of her disbursements, cannot add them up, and is even more incapable of subtracting them from the total sum one has given her.

The actual percentage of illiterates to the total population is illuminating. They reach sixty-five per cent in the country round Naples, thirty-seven per cent in the Romagna, and seventy-five per cent in Sardinia, which is the worst of all. Public opinion therefore, such as it is, is not formed by the Press, but by gossip ; for in an average village of, say, two thousand inhabitants the number of papers sold daily will not be more than thirty or forty. This cannot be due to the price of the article, for a newspaper costs twenty centesimi,

equal to two-fifths of an English penny ; and the real reason is that even those who can read take very little interest in anything outside their own life, and are neither intrigued by the political situation nor, stranger still, thrilled by a really good murder, unless the latter happens in their own village. It is the exception to find even a book in a peasant's house. As a class, he has neither the time nor the inclination for reading.

Life, on the whole, is very dull in the villages, though the people work too hard to be bored. Even the weather cannot be made an excuse for idleness, for in nearly all cases payment is made only for work actually done, or for hours actually worked, and I have often seen labourers continue their job in what we should consider a heavy storm. If, however, the weather is really too bad the men just loaf round doing nothing, and find their way in due course to the *osteria* for a game of cards and a glass of wine. If a man has no money he goes nevertheless, and looks on at the game, in the hope that some lucky player will call for drinks round. The game played is a kind of " nap," and the stakes a litre of wine for the best of a series of hands. The peasant is averse to betting in specie, and keeps his actual cash for the Lotto or one of the local *tombole* (raffles), which are frequently promoted.

The consumption of wine is thus pretty heavy, but the Italian is rarely drunk, or, at least, obviously so. He carries liquor like a gentleman, and, drunk or sober, has the same slow, rolling gait, which he has learned from following his oxen. Perhaps this general sobriety is due to the absence of spirit drinking. It used to be fashionable to take a glass of raw brandy before going to work, but now the law forbids its sale before ten o'clock, and the peasant drinks no spirits at all. It must be confessed that in every village there are a few habitual drunkards to emphasize the general abstemiousness.

The *contadino* eats very cheaply, but in large quantities, of coarse, home-made bread, liberally smeared with garlic ; and is a gastronomic acrobat when it comes to dealing with macaroni. The long, glutinous strands, which could only be neatly consumed by a foreigner through the medium of a

petrol filler, he manages in some magical way to wrap round fork or spoon, and transfer from plate to mouth in the transient instant before the mass unrolls. I have seen a peasant consume a couple of pounds of macaroni sprinkled with high-smelling cheese as speedily and neatly as a man could eat a mutton chop. Polenta is more manageable, but it has largely gone out of fashion except in the North ; and though during the war the Italian learned the taste of meat, he can seldom afford to have it. Every family, however, has a piggery, one of whose inmates is killed and salted down every year. The Italian pig in all his forms is excellent, and particularly so in the guise of cooked hams.

Beyond these scanty pleasures of the table the *contadino* has invented a number of outdoor games to pass the long summer evenings. Most villages possess a bowling-green—or, rather, brown—of hard stamped earth. The ground is too uneven to play with a jack, and the game is really a form of ninepins, shaped roughly out of wood, which are knocked over by rude balls of stone. The whole population turns out to watch a game of *boccie,* and sits round the sides of the alley upon wooden benches, offering approving and caustic comments, or deeply resented advice, to the players. The same game is played in the Dalmatian villages ; but one peculiar, I think, to the Italian country-side is *ruzzola.* A small wheel of solid wood is wound round and round with a string. Two players, each bearing a wheel, take post at the end of a suitable stretch of road. Each in turn launches his wheel, imparting momentum and direction to it by means of the string. The object is to keep the wheel on the road for the longest distance possible, and the winner is he whose wheel covers a marked length of road in the smallest number of throws. The game arouses a fever of excitement, but is invariably played for wine, never for money.

The larger villages are sometimes visited by a strolling theatrical company, which gives its show in some large barn or granary. The repertoire is blood-curdling drama, or broad comedy ; and I have searched in vain for one of the Miracle Plays, which, I was told, used to be presented. A

variant of the legitimate stage is the cinema, which some enterprising ex-emigrant generally introduces in the summer when there are a number of visitors to swell the clientèle. It is rather astonishing to go to the local cinema in a village in the heart of the Abruzzi and to be informed in round American by the proprietor that he fears it is "a one-horse show in a one-horse burg." This prevalence of returned emigrants probably accounts for the popularity of Mr. Chaplin. The ex-New York Italian loves to see him discomfit those police with whom he himself has had many a less satisfactory tussle in the Bowery.

The great days, however, are the *feste*, or public holidays, not so much the official ones as the feast day of the village saint. Preparations for this event continue throughout the year, under the charge of a special committee of ways and means, elected annually on the morrow of the feast. They begin by holding a series of portentously solemn meetings behind locked doors to draw up a plan of campaign. To each member is assigned his special task. One goes round to the threshing floors and begs a measure or two of wheat. Another visits the oil mills and is presented with a litre or two of oil. A third extracts a few eggs or a weakly lamb from a prosperous farmer. The results of all these activities are sold by auction and the sum realized paid into the feast fund. Other committeemen collect cash contributions by house-to-house canvassing, and are rarely refused a little something. When the fund reaches sufficient proportions a deputation is sent into the nearest town to buy mortars, rockets, fireworks, flags, tinsel, confetti, and so on; and, if it has been a good year, to hire a brass band from there or a neighbouring village. The last is generally their own contribution to the public festivities, because they have to lodge and feed the bandsmen.

On the appointed day there arrive at early dawn all the friends and relations who belong to the village by birth, but have migrated elsewhere to live or earn their living. The band or bands are also early on the scene, and, if there are two, they vie with one another, not in music but in noise, all day long. About nine o'clock some excited soul, unable

to contain his enthusiasm, lets off a mortar, which is the signal for a series of explosions as ear-splitting as the discharges of a heavy battery. About ten the grand procession is formed. The saint is brought out of his church and borne through the streets under a palanquin. Before him go a troupe of little girls in frilly white with light blue sashes, scattering the red and yellow flowers of the poppy and the broom. Behind them walks the priest in perspiration and gold-broidered vestments—both heavy. Then a band of men with solemn faces, slightly flushed with importance, their black clothes almost creaking with newness. Next, a company of women, the widows in full weeds, the maidens in white, the married women in gorgeous colours. Alas! all the dresses since the war are modern and psuedo-smart, and the full striped skirt and brocaded bodice of velvet are rare indeed. Last of all comes a file of small boys, struggling between awe and high spirits, giving each other sundry nudges with their elbows, treading slyly on the heels of those in front, and breaking into cackles of laughter, cut unnaturally short by the indignant glances of a mother.

The procession passes through all the streets, and finally arrives at the little piazza. Here at the entrances have been erected arches of boxwood branches, and striped posts have been set up at equal distances, festooned with wreaths of box and laurel, and hung with gaily coloured ribbons. The square itself is black with people, all turned towards a raised platform by the fountain in the centre. As the procession enters, the church bells break into music, the bands are hushed, and the people sink reverently on their knees, regardless of the knobby cobbles. The priest mounts the platform, leaving the saint beneath his canopy below. He intones a prayer or two, and utters a few words of benediction; then, mopping his face with a huge red handkerchief, he descends with the air of a man whose work is done, and the procession moves off at a brisker rate, to deposit the saint in his corner again until next year.

In the evening there will be more mortars, fireworks, and band playing, and a dance will be held in a neighbouring

barn. The dances are appallingly sedate, the couples turning slowly as if in danger of collapse if there were the slightest departure from rigidity—a not improbable event at this time of day. But suddenly there is a quicker stir. The dancers steer themselves painfully to the walls, and into the central space thus left vacant there leaps a girl, with a whirl of petticoats, a flash of dark eyes, a jingle of bangles, and a shake of shining hair, to dance a *pas seul* before an audience beating the time with stamping feet, clapping hands, and short, sharp cries. A concertina in the corner wails a dirge-like accompaniment, strangely out of keeping with the staccato of the dance. Here we may take our leave of the *festa*, and go out into the starlit street. All is still. Even the bands have blown themselves into merciful impotence; and from far up the hill-side comes a tinkle of sheep-bells and a high, sweet voice singing, "Sospiri miei, andate ove vi mando" ("Go forth, O my sighs, whither I send you").

The *contadino* is, as I have said, at heart a simple soul, shrewd enough at a bargain, and honest according to his lights, that is to say, apart from the petty dishonesties which time and custom have hallowed. He is fiercely patriotic; but the fatherland for which he feels is his own village, whose honour and reputation he will defend to the death. So marked is this local patriotism that to this day if you ask your way in one Italian village to another a few miles distant, you will be met with black looks and a shrug of the shoulders. Your peasant will know the way perfectly well, but he will not confess that he knows anything at all about the *forestieri* (strangers) who inhabit the next village. From this and similar peculiarities he has achieved an undeserved reputation among townsfolk for being a little bit "wanting." Some villages are renowned, even in the countryside, for the supreme *naïveté* of their inhabitants, and I will close this chapter with a few of the stories which are told about the most famous—Belmonte, formerly Montebello, about twelve miles south of Rieti. There is a whole fund of them, but the following, so far as I can discover, are all authentic.

In the middle of last century the Montebellesi decided that

the old image of their patron saint (St. Sebastian) was really too shabby for so great a village, and raised a subscription to buy a new one. The order was placed with the wax moulders of Rieti, and a few days before the saint's *festa* a commission of four members of the communal council went down to the town to fetch the saint. They loaded him on a mule, and were well on the way home when a torrential downpour broke upon them, and all the party, including the saint, was drenched. But, fortunately, at the next turning of the road they espied a little *osteria*, from whose open door issued a spicy odour, announcing that the *ostessa* had just finished baking her bread. Nothing could have been better, and in a trice the mule was hitched to the gatepost, the saint unloaded and carried inside to dry himself before the oven fire, together with his escort. Somebody had the bright idea that he would dry quicker inside the oven, and in he was popped, while the men consumed a glass or two of wine, insensibly extended to a litre or two. After an hour or so thus pleasantly spent it was discovered that the storm had passed, and three of the escort went out to unhitch the mule, while the fourth was enjoined to withdraw the saint from the oven. But the next minute those outside were startled by a hoarse cry, and their companion came rushing out of the furnace room yelling, " Ha fatto una sporcheria, e se ne ieto " (" He has made a mess and slung his hook "). All hurried inside, and there, sure enough, was nothing but a pool of liquid on the oven floor. The commission on their return ascribed the event to a miracle, and pretended that a village to which such a blessing had been vouchsafed stood in no need of an image at all; but the law, invoked by the subscribers to the fund, was sceptical enough to make them pay for a new one.

On another occasion the village had paid by public subscription for a new clock to be put into the church tower, complete with a striker to tell the hour. It was soon discovered that the bandits from the next village were boasting that they too could hear the sound, and were obtaining their time free by the kindness of the Montebellesi. The latter,

therefore, sent a deputation to demand some contribution to the cost of the clock, and were briefly told to go and die assassinated. In a fury, they actually went to law about the matter, but, of course, lost their case. So determined were they, however, not to give something for nothing that the communal council was solemnly convened to see what could be done. The minutes of the meeting reveal that the first proposal was to plant a hedge round the tower and so prevent the sound from escaping, but the motion was lost when a venerable statesman pointed out that to produce the desired effect the hedge must be left to grow for approximately two hundred years. The suggestion he made, therefore, was to wall up the windows in the church tower. The mover of the first proposal got his own back by pointing out that though some people were very clever they were, apparently, not clever enough to know that sound did not percolate through three feet of bricks and of mortar, and that if the windows were walled up they might as well not have a striker at all. He was adjudged to be correct, and the dispute was compromised by adopting a suggestion to put in a cork clapper; and the meeting broke up thoroughly satisfied with their own wisdom. But—horror of horrors!—when the clapper was installed and the population awaited the striking of the hour in joyful anticipation of the chagrin of their neighbours, there emerged from the tower a miserable, dull thump barely audible to those in the piazza beneath. So the Montebellesi were compelled to give it up, and still supply free time to all and sundry. But there is bad blood between them and their beneficiaries to this day, and fights are common when the two sides meet at cattle fairs with a glass of wine aboard.

Two rather good stories are also told of the ingenuity of the village priest—not the present incumbent, but his predecessor in the third generation. It appears that the Montebellesi wished to enlarge their church, which had become too small for the increased population. They therefore consulted an architect, but his estimate was far beyond their means, and they were on the point of giving up the idea when the priest came forward and declared that though the architect

was a foul bandit, and would doubtless suffer many years in purgatory, if not worse, yet to a servant of God all things were possible, and he himself would undertake the task for nothing. Two things only were necessary—faith, and twenty pounds of yellow soap. The use of the latter was unspecified, but the former was to bring all the male population to the church at dusk on the next Saturday evening. They came, and were ranged by the priest in one line round the inside of the church with their faces to the wall. In the dim obscurity, lighted by a single taper, the priest stood at the altar and cried in a loud voice on the saints to repeat the miracle of Joshua at Jericho, adding the injunction that the heavenly masons were so to change the programme that the walls should not fall flat, but recede. He then yelled to the men to push all together. They did so, and found, to their amazement that the walls yielded, so much so that all fell flat on their faces. Thus did Montebello enlarge its church, for although some cynic suggested that the priest had soaped the floor for a couple of yards all round the church, so that it was feet and not walls which had given way, the eye of faith perceived next morning that the chairs, which had formerly been ranged close to the wall, were now at least six feet distant from it. The hand of gratitude, therefore, brought to the priest a number of flasks of wine, eggs, fat capons, and other provender.

Shortly afterwards the people thought that their tower was unworthy of their bigger church, and decided that it must be heightened. It was useless to spend money when they had a real live worker of architectural miracles in their midst, so they went again to the priest, who found himself constrained by his reputation to promise what they wished. This time, however, he demanded two hundred metres of good linen of double width. With this he draped the whole of the tower from top to bottom one evening at dusk, and announced that next morning the job would be done. Sure enough at the appointed hour the awakening village perceived that the tower had grown a full yard in the night, for the drapery was now at least that distance from the ground. The priest obtained more presents and enough linen to last him a life-

time; nor did anyone remark that a week before he had borrowed a large pair of shears.

The case of the Farfa devil is well known throughout the Sabina, and happened only about forty years ago. A certain Montebellese, Giovanni by name, son of one of the protagonists in the drama of the saint in the oven, was proprietor of a small *osteria* situated at some distance from the village and separated from it by a thick wood. Every night after the last of his rare clients had departed he used to lock up and walk home through the wood, a journey which he particularly disliked. Nor was his business prosperous enough to console him for the daily pilgrimage. A festive friend of his, Michele, knew the sombre broodings of his soul, and determined to profit by them. He represented to Giovanni that he, Michele, had a special pull on the devil, and, for a consideration, would strike a bargain with the Father of Evil on his friend's behalf. Giovanni was to sell his soul, and in return receive a large sum of money. Giovanni had considerable doubts whether he possessed such an article, but none at all that he was willing to part with it, if any, in return for release from his miserable life, so that he readily accepted. Michele pocketed his savings, and led him on a dark evening to an old limekiln, overgrown with bushes. He made him kneel at the entrance, with a stick across his shoulders, and both hands hitched over the stick, so that his balance was very uncertain. Then the invocation began:

"Spirit of Eternal Evil, come forth, O, come forth to take possession of this immortal soul which is yours to buy!" ("How much will you sell your soul for Giovanni? Sixty thousand lire? It's a lot for the article, but here goes.")

"Come forth, infernal Spirit, and buy this soul for sixty thousand lire, to be yours as soon as the money is finished." ("That's right, isn't it, Giovanni?" "Yes, that's right." "Well, don't be afraid, whatever shape the Foul Fiend may show himself in. He may come as a man or a beast. But speak out boldly, and be ready to sign the contract with your blood. Look out, now. I'm going to begin the third and last incantation.")

"Come forth, Spirit of Hell, once. Come forth, infernal Spirit, twice. Come forth, ancient Evil, thrice!" As he finished Michele brought down his stick with a whack on the bushes in front of Giovanni. Something large and alive jumped out, butted Giovanni in the chest, and set him rolling down the hill. He picked himself up and scurried off, howling for help to the Madonna, with Michele following as fast as his laughter would allow, and letting off an occasional howl too, for form's sake.

A man with a gun, waiting at the bottom of the hill for a stray hare, shot a beauty that evening, so that he was happy. Michele got drunk, so that he was happy too, and told the story in his cups. But poor Giovanni got only an attack of jaundice which confined him to bed for a month, and a bill from the priest for exorcising the devil directly he was strong enough to move as far as the church.

CHAPTER IV

ITALIAN FARMING AND SPORT

I TURN from the lighter to the more serious side of Italian life in the country, in order to describe the system of tenure and cultivation which prevails in that part best known to me, the Tiber valley. I hope to make it less dull than the title threatens, and it is well to realize that Italy contains live persons as well as dead palaces, and that even the Colosseum is an ephemeral affair compared to the incredibly ancient occupations of the humble peasant.

Private property in Italy may be divided into three classes of holding. There are first the *latifondi*, or big estates, which have come down from feudal times in the same family, and whose name betrays their still older origin as the slave-tilled farms of the Roman epoch. The whole aspect of the countryside is, indeed, feudal, every eminence being crowned by a castle, at the base of which cluster the houses which once it protected or oppressed. The *latifondi* are very big, and usually very backward. They are managed by bailiffs, in whose hands is entire control, and with whom there is only one way to deal if you want to acquire or lease a piece of the estate. That is a very old way, and a very annoying way, but, of course, a man must live. The owners are not, however, altogether absentee, for nearly all them pass at least a portion of the summer months in their country castles, many of which are magnificent, if hardly modern in their equipment; for very few have capital enough to modernize either their houses or their methods of cultivation, and their estates are gradually being sold off in parcels. Many have, it is true, been saved by the agitation concerning so-called undeveloped lands, which took place soon after the war, and to them was a veritable godsend; for they were enabled to rid themselves of much of their poorer land, successfully disposed of to the

public authorities or one of the semi-charitable organizations, such as the Opera Nazionale, which combined a fervent enthusiasm for the idea of settling men on the land with an utter lack of the knowledge requisite to do it.

Estates of smaller, but still considerable size, are owned by the class called *possidenti*, or, as we should say "owner-farmers." They are derived from sold-off parcels of the *latifondi*, or from Church estates acquired and sold by the Italian Government after 1870. These estates are generally good land, and the farming of them is the best in Italy. It is to the *possidenti*, seconded by the efforts of the central authority, that is due the rapidly extending use of fertilizers, which until a few years ago were unknown. And lastly there are the *proprietarii*, or owners of lesser farms, down to and including the smallholder. This class is by far the most numerous and farms well over half the privately owned lands. Indeed, to-day, it is very rare to come across a peasant who does not own a tiny patch of land, even though it be only a vegetable garden.

Public lands, of which there are immense quantities, are owned either by the State or by the lesser public bodies, such as the provinces, the communes, and also by the Università Agrarie. The State-owned lands are chiefly those taken over from former Governments, and consist, for the most part, of forests and mountain pastures. The forests in particular are subjected to a most careful regime—an absolute necessity in a land where wood is practically the only form of fuel used for domestic purposes, and where a diminution of the yearly supply would lead to the gravest consequences. During the war, for example, when coal was lacking even for the public services, the vines suffered seriously from the depredations of the freezing people, and I recall that wood was burned even by the express trains. The fact was forcibly brought to my notice by the Venice-Paris express being held up for four hours near Brescia while the engine-driver, fireman, and passengers scoured the country-side for wood to feed the brute. Being on the way home for my first leave for six months I strongly objected to this nasty reminder of a trench fatigue.

Of the two kinds of forest, virgin and pollard, the former are thinned out periodically, the trees to be cut down being marked and sold by auction *in situ*; and for every tree cut down the purchaser has to plant a new one. The Italian forests are very pleasant to the eye, but they are not majestic, for the trees do not grow big, and are generally executed when half grown. The pollard forests are cut every nine years; though if the soil is thin, and the trees therefore of poor quality, the cutting is postponed for a further nine. The State takes no part in any of these processes beyond deciding when the forest is to be cut, and under what conditions. The rights of cutting and marketing are bought at public auction, the forests being divided for this purpose into areas of very large extent. Since a part of his concession is thus nearer a market than the rest, the purchaser generally divides it into two. The wood from one half he cuts and carts to market for firewood; that from the second half he burns down into charcoal, wherby he reduces its weight to one-third, with a corresponding economy in transport. The charcoal burners (*carbonari*) have a considerable place in Italian history, and one famous secret society was known by their name from the habit of its members of going into the forests to burn charcoal as an excuse to screen their meetings.

Afforestation is thoroughly well understood and most wisely practised. Indeed, some of the State forests are set apart as schools for the teaching of this science and for the training of the *Guardie forestali*. As for the State mountain lands, these are invariably let for summer pasture during the months when the grasses on the plains are scorched up, and are sold by auction to the highest bidder.

Provincial lands are mostly of the same character, but the provinces also own some arable land, which is let upon nine or eighteen year leases, with the exception of some of the best, which is reserved by the provinces themselves to serve as experimental farms or agricultural colleges. The provinces also administer the lands belonging to charitable foundations, of which there are a great number—hospitals, orphanages, schools, Monti di Pieta, the Assistenza Pubblica, Congre-

gazioni di Carita, and so on. These institutions, which are of both public and private foundation, are very generally endowed with land or town property, and are known by the common name of *Opere Pie*.

The commune, which is the smallest unit of Italian local government, is also a considerable landowner, and a far greater proportion of its lands are arable than in the case of the provinces. The commune may have a population of anything from one thousand to four thousand, and is subdivided into the central communal town, and a number of outlying *Frazioni* (fractions). It is administered by an elected council, representing all the *Frazioni*, but subject to very strict control by the larger authorities. For example, the communal council has no executive power, but must send up all its decisions for approval by the provincial council, or, failing that, the prefect. The latter has also the power to appoint an extraordinary commissioner to examine the doings of the communal council, with discretion either to reform or to dissolve it. In the latter event, this officer administers the commune himself, and the proceeding is therefore highly popular with the authorities because it gives them an immense political pull on the districts thus administered. There are on an average three hundred communal councils per year thus dissolved, and their districts subject to an extraordinary regime ; and the fact would be a severe reflection upon the capacity of the Italians for local self-government were it not due in many cases purely to dissatisfaction on the part of the central authority with the political colour of the commune.

The income of the communal council, where such councils are allowed to exist, is derived from the rents of their properties, from rates, and from a percentage of the national taxes, that is to say, of the contributions paid by the inhabitants of the commune to the State. But its most important source of income is the *Dazio Consumo*, a duty levied on all articles of food or drink sold in the commune. In all open villages the collection of the duty is farmed out for a yearly sum, bid for by would-be collectors at public auction. Else-

where the duty is collected at a convenient barrier at the outskirts of the village, and every motorist knows the exasperating halts while a leisurely official examines the Rolls-Royce to see whether there is a cheese concealed in the bonnet or a parcel of vegetables in the tool-chest. In spite of the traditional unpopularity of the profession of tax-gathering, there is always some competition for the right of collecting. Every one knows roughly what it is safe to bid, for the rate levied must not exceed a tariff fixed by the council; nor is there really much friction over the discharge of a profession hallowed by time and custom. The system, therefore, works smoothly enough, and the communes are, as far as one can judge, singularly well administered.

The properties and rights of the commune are of very ancient foundation, being derived from those formerly possessed by the feudal lords of the manor. The system was that the local baron granted rights of pasturing, sowing, and wood gleaning to his dependants in return for their personal service in time of war. When the feudal demesnes were abolished the rights devolved upon the communes, and the communal officers were established in the seigneural castles. Most of the latter are to-day in picturesque ruins, but some have been kept in a fair state of preservation, and are used as offices, and sometimes even for schools. An excellent example is the castle at Nemi, and I insert this fact to give the visitor an excuse to go there and gorge himself on the luscious strawberries which grow in profusion seven hundred feet below on the borders of the lake where once swam the pleasure galley of Domitian. The Nemi gardens are as satisfying to the eye as to the inside, and he who has the courage to descend the rocky path down the cliff can take his rest in the shade of glorious masses of white, blue, and purple hydrangeas, which bloom all summer from June to August, and are carried up to civilization upon the heads of panting women, or in baskets slung on the flanks of dusty donkeys. From the agricultural point of view the gardens are also worth visiting, for they are the best example of the rise of market gardening which can be seen near Rome. Neither the journey to Nemi, therefore,

nor this paragraph is to be considered as a purely gastronomic digresssion.

Communal pasture and forest land is managed in the same way as similar land owned by the State or the province. As regards arable land, the richer farms are let on nine or eighteen year leases, but the poorer are divided into two parts, one of which is sown while the other lies fallow every year. The latter is not entirely unproductive, for the sheep can gain some sustenance from the wild grasses which grow on it, and it can nearly always be let for pasture, at least during some portion of the year. The sheep droppings are about all the manuring that these lands receive, and it must be confessed that they are very hard worked. They are let to landless members of the commune in lots, and the rent is paid in kind. The ceremony of collection is a curious one. On an appointed day the peasant brings his crop to the threshing floor, where an agent of the commune is in attendance. After the threshing is done the agent divides the wheat or oats into two heaps, one about a quarter the size of the other. The smaller heap constitutes the rent. It is all collected into the public granary, and forms a reserve known as the *Monte frumentaria*, from which grain is sold at a reduced price to the poorer people during the winter months.

The last of the landowning corporations are the Università Agrarie, an institution confined to the ex-Papal States. Their lands are formed out of the confiscated or purchased estates of the lesser feudal owners and the monasteries. They form, in fact, independent *frazioni* in many communes, because though originally self-contained estates they were too small to form communes by themselves. They are not altogether separated from the communes which they adjoin, for they send two representatives to the communal council, and these have an equal voice with the other members in the deliberations of that body, besides being specially charged to look after the interests of the Università. Their public land, however, is not subject to any sort of control by the communal council, but is managed and administered by a specially elected council, on behalf of the *utenti*, or " users," i.e. persons quali-

fied to lease it. The qualification is ten years' residence in the *frazione* and a clean conduct sheet.

The Università have, in addition to their freehold land, certain rights of sowing and pasturage, conferred on them by ancient endowments, in many private properties, and also the rights of acorn and dead wood gleaning in many private forests. In all these cases the owner cannot do anything to his land or his forest without the consent of the Università, and this unsatisfactory state of affairs has either led to his buying the Università out, or, more commonly, to his making over to them a part of his estate in freehold in exchange for the liberation of the rest. The Università are not run for profit, and any they make must be given to local charities. I pass now to the more individual aspects of farming in Italy.[1]

The cultivation of a holding in Italy is, so far as possible, a family affair. The farmer cultivates directly as much of his land as can be worked by himself, his wife, his children, and his relations, whose efforts are usually supplemented by one or two hired labourers engaged from day to day at the busier seasons. He invariably ploughs the whole of his farm himself with his pair of bullocks, but, if his domestic resources are unequal to complete the cultivation of the whole, he lets the surplus to a *contadino* who has no bullocks. The latter does the sowing, reaping, and all the manual labour. The owner, in addition to ploughing, carts the crop to the thresher. This system of partnership, which extends over two years, is known as *tirare avanti*, or "carry on," because of the dovetailing of the labour.

The actual crop is divided each year as follows. Five per cent of the whole goes to the owner of the thresher, and, if the land be hired, one quarter to the owner of the land as rent. The remainder, grain and straw alike, is equally divided between the owner of the bullocks and the man who has done the manual labour. An interesting variant of this system is that known as *Mezzadria* or "half-sharing." This

[1] In the account which follows, the statements made apply chiefly to the smallholders, but are approximately true of all kinds of farmers.

is really an elaborate plan for the payment of rent in kind. The owner of the land finds a *contadino* who has a little capital, and enters into a contract with him, under which the *contadino* is to cultivate a farm and pay the owner as rent three-quarters of the olive crop, and half of all other crops. The tenant has to use fertilizers for the land, and sulphur, or sulphate of copper, for the vines and olives, the cost being equally shared. All stock and implements are similarly purchased on half shares and sold at the end of the partnership, when the eventual profit or loss is also divided; but, as a matter of fact, this liquidation is seldom necessary, because the contract, originally for six or nine years, is always renewed if the tenant has proved satisfactory.

This system prevents the land being too hard worked by tenants desirous of extracting all they can from it during a short tenancy, and the good care of the farm is further secured by a provision that the tenant shall execute every year a certain number of improvements, such as the planting of new vines and olives. In return he is provided with a good house, stabling for his cattle, and storeroom for all his firewood. He has also a vegetable garden for his use, on condition that he supplies the owner's table free; and he is allowed to keep poultry, provided he presents the *padrone* with one or more fat capons or turkeys at Christmas, and a certain number of eggs, especially at Easter. A very common clause in *Mezzadria* contracts provides that the tenant must fatten a number of pigs, which are bought young on half shares, to be killed and salted or smoked at home in due course and the hams and bacon sold.

In all countries after the war there was a desire, almost amounting to a mania, to follow the old Roman custom of settling the returned soldiers on the land. There will be many who remember the canvassing of the British Army for intending settlers, and still more the struggles to fulfil the promises made to such as accepted. Italy had the same ambition and the same difficulties. In the first flush of enthusiasm a decree was passed authorizing disbanded soldiers to expropriate any unimproved land at a valuation and divide it in

lots among themselves. In its crude state this decree caused serious trouble and fatal conflicts between would-be expropriators and the landowners, so that it was soon altered to make the consent of the owner a necessary preliminary. I have already mentioned the godsend which this proved to the big landowners. Much utterly worthless land was disposed of at absurdly high prices, which very few of the settlers could pay outright. In most cases the Opera Nazionale paid on their behalf, took over their war gratuities in part payment, and took out a mortgage on the land for the balance, to be paid off in annual instalments. Very few of these settlers have made good. The charges on their land were crushingly heavy; the new land itself was usually impossibly far from any habitation, and very poor in quality; and the tenants had seldom any practical knowledge of farming. People like the village carpenter, cobbler, barber, or baker, were full of the idea that, if they had a patch of land, it would grow, of itself or in return for a few hours' work, all the grain, olives, and grapes they required, so that they would obtain their food and drink for nothing. They soon found out their mistake, and are now anxious to sell, but they cannot obtain more than half the price they paid for their land two or three years ago, and the whole experiment has been an unqualified disaster. The only persons who will really benefit from it are the small professional farmers, who will be able to buy up the lots cheap.

Besides those who own or lease land, there is a considerable number of people who work for hire, either because they have no land of their own or because they have finished the cultivation of their own holding, and seek to make their living expenses while waiting for their crop to grow. Wages are low, having fallen considerably since the war, and there are few British agricultural labourers who would be willing to work the forty-eight hours week put in by their Italian brothers for the sum of eight or nine lire per day (about one shilling and ninepence of our money). Women receive only six to seven lire per day. Moreover, wages are paid only for time actually worked. The day is divided into

four quarters, and if for any quarter the labourer knocks off for any reason whatever he is not paid for that quarter. But if he is ill he receives a daily allowance and free medical attendance from the Societa Operaia, to which he has to pay a monthly quota. He has very few perquisites. For special work, such as pruning the olives or vines, or mowing hay, he is given an extra lira a day and an allowance of wine; and for harvest ten to eleven lire a day, four meals, and a litre and a half of wine. But for this magnificent allowance he must work from sunrise to sunset, with two hours' rest in the middle of the day, so that his pay works out at about twopence an hour, plus his food and drink. His life is terribly hard, and it is extraordinary how he can live at all in the seasons when there is little farm work. At such times he generally manages to secure employment on house-building, road-making, or one of the many public works which are now being undertaken in rural districts; and for such work he is paid one lira fifty an hour.

Harvest under the eternally blue sky and the eternally burning sun of the Italian summer is free from many of the dangers which beset the British farmer. There is, for example, no fear that proceedings will be interrupted by a sudden downpour, or that a warm, damp period will cause the cut corn to sprout. The crops are all cut by hand; or, at least, upon none of the many farms I have visited have I ever seen a mechanical reaper. The wheat harvest begins at the end of June, and the carting is finished by the middle of July. No time is wasted in storage, but the crop is threshed immediately after reaping on one of the several threshing floors in the village. These floors are not fitted with permanently installed machinery, but are served by an itinerant thresher, which is brought by its owner in turn to the various floors, and for whose use a charge of from three to five per cent of the crop is made. It is here also that the several portions of landlord and tenant, and the percentages destined for the payment of taxes and the use of charity are set aside, and each carted off by its owner.

The usual rotation of crops is: First year, maize or horse

beans ; second year, wheat or oats ; third year, fallow, used, as previously explained, for sheep grazing. In specially favoured regions sugar beet is grown ; but with this exception no other heavy root crops are ever planted. There is however, a considerable acreage under potatoes, especially since the war. The Italian potato is big, square, and unattractive to the eye, but it has a very pleasant, rather sweet taste, and is highly nutritious. The maize crop needs special cultivation. The grain is sown in the shallow furrows left by the primitive plough. Next the bigger lumps of earth left by the shard are carefully broken up with a hoe, for a harrow is altogether too modern an invention. When the plants have sprouted a few inches they are thinned out, and the furrow filled in ; and finally, when the shoots are well up, they are earthed or banked up, as are the potatoes on an English farm. Weeds are not very luxuriant in a country so dry, and it is never necessary to hoe the crops more than once at the end of winter. Sometimes, however, the careful farmer will send women in to do a few days' hand weeding in the spring. I am always unreasonably chagrined when I see this being done, for the chief weed is the poppy, and the gorgeous red of its blossoms among the dark green forest of the three-parts-grown wheat is a lovely and pleasant sight. The poppies also seem to attract the butterflies ; for on any field where the red shows strongly there are sure to be myriads of many-hued insects, fluttering gracefully and aimlessly from flower to flower, and sometimes leaning away like the sails of a fairy ship from the whirring dragon-flies.

The richer land in the valley bottoms is generally left in pasture for the winter grazing, but when it becomes stale it is broken up and sown for a year or two with wheat, before being allowed to relapse into pasture. It is, however, never re-sown with grass nor even fertilized, unless on the rare occasions when it is put down to lucerne. Upon the slopes, wherever there is a scrap of earth, vines and olives are planted, and there is no lovelier sight than a fine old olive orchard such as may be seen on the slopes near Tivoli. Each tree in turn is surrounded by a netted run for the sheep, so that

each is properly manured. The olive is a comparative stranger to Italy, having been brought in by the Romans from the East in the second century B.C. They never showed, therefore, the same jealousy with regard to its culture as they did in the case of the vine, whose planting was absolutely forbidden in Gaul for a long time.

The whole business of the cultivation of the olive is so integral a part of Italian husbandry that I shall perhaps be forgiven for dwelling on it for a few lines. Most of the trees are raised from cuttings, which are taken from the débris cut away from the old trees in pruning. Rods about a foot long are selected, planted upright in trenched ground, and covered with a thin layer of earth. They sprout and send forth roots in this nursery, where they remain for six or seven years, being pruned every other year. At the end of this time their stems have grown to about six feet high, and they are all transplanted to their lifelong home, the orchard. Here they are firmly bedded out at a distance of ten or twelve yards from each other, so as to give plenty of room for the eventual spread of the branches and for the corraling of the sheep. In another five or six years they begin to bear a little fruit, but they are not really in bearing until their coming of age, that is to say, until they have been in the orchard some twenty years.

When it is sufficiently grown up to be a productive member of the agricultural society the tree is pruned every three or four years, and as a rule bears a full crop every other year. But the progressive farmers of Tuscany and Umbria have discovered that a pruning every year produces a yearly crop, the tree, so to say, showing its gratitude in proportion to the attention paid it. It is a persistent creature once it has begun, and goes on bearing for centuries. Though feminine in gender, it grows more glorious with age, and rots on the inside instead of on the out. It is therefore operated on with a hatchet, and split from top to bottom until the decayed wood can all be cut out. In spite of being thus disembowelled, the tree goes on flourishing exceedingly in three or four different sections, and it strikes the observer as almost

miraculous to observe a fine spread of perfectly healthy branches attached to the mother trunk apparently only by a piece of bark.

In April and May the trees are all a mass of white blossom, lying like snow on the cushions of the delicate green leaves. Then the funny little pods begin to show, and by October the fruit is nearly ripe. Then begins the harvest, which lasts for six months, and is a pleasantly lethargic affair. Every ten days or so the women go out and pick up the fruit that has fallen from the trees, filling it into fibre bags, and loading it on to donkeys, which carry it to the mill. The trees are not stripped until the spring, when each branch is cleared methodically by men with ladders. But sometimes the lower branches are picked quite early in the season upon the more progressive farms, though the old stagers say that the fruit is never so good as when it is allowed to fall by itself.

When the cavalcade of donkeys arrives in the village it is met by the farmer, who measures each worker's picking, and marks the number of bushels upon each person's tally stick. The men are paid in cash, but the women in oil, at the rate of so much per measure. The reckoning is made at the end of the season, and every woman sells as much of her earnings as she cannot use at home. The women have also the right of gleaning for stray olives after the harvest is officially over, and whatever they can find is made into oil by the owner, who gives them a full half of the result.

No sooner is the daily tally made than the bags are carted straight to the mill, for the sooner they are ground the better the quality of the oil. Here a large olive farmer has set up his machinery, wherewith he grinds not only his own crop, but those of others, at a charge of so much oil per sack. He also keeps the cake for himself. The fruit is put under edge-runners made of granite, and ground for about an hour into a most evil-looking paste, which possesses, however, a delightful smell. This paste is filled into circular bags of esparto grass or cocoa fibre, which in turn are put under screw or hydraulic presses, and the liquid run off into tubs. There it is left to settle until the oil rises to the top, when it is

skimmed off with a copper ladle, and put into big earthenware amphoræ. When bottled in this way it is of a muddy dark colour, but it clears itself within the bottle or jar in a very short time. Pure olive oil is very wholesome, but with their mania for some little trickery the shopkeepers generally dilute it with some sort of chemical, and that is why many people imagine they cannot touch olive oil.[1]

Nothing of the fruit is waste. It yields only about twenty to twenty-five per cent of oil, but a considerable quantity is further extracted from the cake by a factory process and used for soap-making. Anything left over is made into firelighters.

The olive is a profitable crop, and its cultivation is much on the increase, new orchards being laid down almost every day. But it is subject to a number of pests, which do enormous damage. One nasty little creature is the *Mosca oleara*, a fly rather smaller than the average house-fly, which burrows into the fruit and lays its eggs inside. The grub hatches out and, unharmed by spraying, on account of the skin which protects him, lives literally in his meals, and gnaws out the pulp of the fruit. When he has finished eating his house, he falls to the ground, and turns into a chrysalis. Here Providence sometimes plays a scurvy trick on him; for he must have moisture if he is to hatch out into a fly, and failing it, he simply shrivels up and dies. This year, for example, when there was a very hot early spring, he has received a terrible set-back, and has almost disappeared. His companion in evil doing is the *Cicloconeum*, which a few years ago absolutely destroyed many trees, leaves and all. But fortunately he was found to be defenceless to the same solution as is used for spraying the vines, and his day is over. So much for the olive and his enemies.

The vintage is so familiar a process that it needs no description, and even if not perceptible to the eye it forces itself upon the attention because of the appalling smell of the

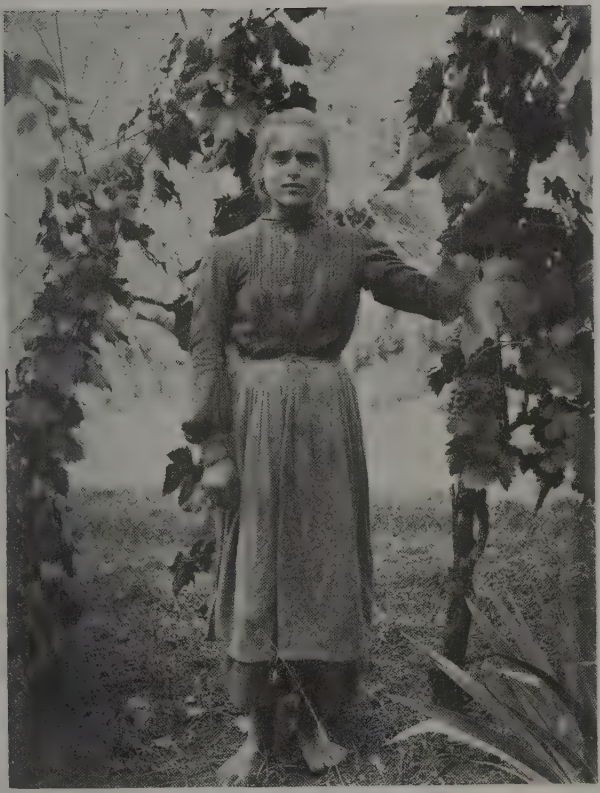
[1] This is particularly the case with olive oil prepared for export. The exporters filter it, doctor it up, and fill it into tins. The acids in the oil dissolve the lead in the tin, and make it turn rancid almost as soon as it is opened, besides turning one of the purest of substances into an actively poisonous compound. An infallible sign of doctored oil is a black tinge.

must which pervades the Italian villages, to the exclusion of more ordinary odours, all powerful enough in normal times, during the month of September. Nor is the yellow must of the torn and crushed grapes at all a gladsome sight, and perhaps the bacchanal orgies were originally instituted, not to express the gaiety of the wine-makers, but to render them insensible to the disagreeable accompaniments of the process.

I must give a final word to one most important section of Italian farming, with which are connected many of its most interesting customs and ceremonies, namely, the raising of stock and sheep. The ordinary farm stock consists of the often-mentioned working bullocks and cows, the difference between a working and a milch cow being that the former is never milked, but reserved entirely for the lighter transport work and for the production of calves for veal.

In the Pontine marshes there are also large herds of buffaloes of terrifying aspect. But they are generally in charge of a tiny child, and submit meekly to being milked. One curious use made of them is to clear the dikes in the autumn and spring. They are driven down into the bottom, and move along, crushing with their enormous weight the weeds which impede the free flow of the water.

The Tiber valley farmer also owns a horse, mule, or donkey to drive him to market. The mules are fine, big, rawboned animals, with all the bad temper, tricks, and working capacity of their kind. The donkeys are a small and woolly breed, but capable of dragging or carrying immense weights—even that of the farmer's wife on occasion. The horses are poor and thin, and in no way resemble the farm horses of Northern Europe, nor the fine, quasi-Arab breed so general in the Italian cavalry. Of the stock that is reared for meat, little that is flattering can be said. There are few or no "fat" cattle in the technical sense of the term, and no stock book. Of recent years some farmers of the more modern stamp have moved in from the Marche and are raising a better breed, but the hill cattle are terribly and wretchedly cared for. They are never stalled, summer or winter, and however cold it may be, they are simply herded into an open yard at



A YOUNG VINEYARD WORKER

night, where there is a stack of straw in the corner for them to eat. In the daytime they are turned out on to the hillside, where, in summer, there is grass enough, but in winter nothing whatever except a little scrub, which even the sheep will not eat, and a few bushes. By the end of the winter they are reduced to walking skeletons, covered with ticks, and many even die of starvation.

Sheep raising is practised on a large scale. There are many flocks whose numbers run into thousands, belonging either to a single owner or to several who have clubbed together. In the latter event, one man is elected as manager, and has to buy the fodder, hire the pasturage, and sell the produce, while his companions work for a monthly wage. At the end of the season they divide up the profits among them, each taking a sum proportionate to the number of sheep he has contributed to the flock. The sheep are driven into the mountains at the end of May, and return to the plains during the early part of October; hence the local saying, "Sant' Urbano manda i greggi in montagna, e San Gallo le fa ritornare alla stalla" ("St. Urban sends the flocks to the mountains, and St. Gallus makes them to return to the fold"). The annual migrations take place on the feast days of these saints, the precise date by which all sheep must be cleared from the lowlands being March 15th in the case of hay meadows, and June 24th in that of all other lands.

These sheep migrations, which have continued year by year for centuries, are an extraordinary sight, and make one think that Don Quixote was not really such a fool when he mistook a big flock for an army. There is one shepherd to every hundred sheep, each with his dog of a special breed, which, were it better known, would speedily become popular in other lands. These dogs are pure white, and as big as mastiffs, with long, coarse coats, and heads rather like a clumber spaniel. They are exceedingly fierce and dangerous to strangers, being trained to protect the flocks from wolves in the Apennines, and from thieves in all places. During the migrations, one shepherd with a couple of these dogs walks

in front of the flock, while his companions, with their dogs, skirmish on the flanks and in rear. The column is brought up by a cart carrying the gear of the richer shepherds, and the nets and stakes for penning the sheep at night; and by a number of pack-horses loaded with the property of the poorer shepherds. At dusk the army is halted, and the sheep are turned into one of the regular caravanserai, which are established at intervals of from ten to fifteen miles along the traditional roads. The pen is run up and the sheep confined and counted. The men then retire to the wattle huts adjoining, one of which is generally equipped as a poor inn; or, if there are no huts, they build a regular brigands' fire in the open and sleep on the ground around it, wrapped in their cloaks. The last business before turning in is the milking of the ewes and the making of a powerful cheese from their milk, which is left next morning as payment for the night's lodging with the owner of the land.

Arrived in the hills, the shepherds drive their sheep to the allotted pasture, which they have bought the winter before. Most of this pasture belongs to the Università, and to hire them the shepherd must be an *utente*, and pay a small poll tax for every head of sheep grazed. He is compelled also to change his sheep pens every other night, so as to manure as much ground as possible, and is liable to a heavy fine if he fails to do so. But on the public lands he is free to dispose of the manure as he pleases, and usually gives it in part payment to the man from whom he buys the extra grass required by his flock.

All summer he lives a hard life in a wretched hut of straw or bulrushes, bound together by wire; or in one rather better of wattle and daub. Very unsavoury are these habitations, for they serve also as cheese factories, where the morning and evening supply of milk is turned into a glutinous substance of unprepossessing appearance and revolting taste. Every ewe gives on an average a quarter of a litre of milk per day, so that the quantity for a large flock is enormous. The cheese, however, has a ready sale. The large owners make contracts with grocers in the city for a whole year; the

smaller sell their cheese locally. The buyer salts and seasons it, and it keeps well, in so far as anything originally putrescent can be said to keep at all.

There is great excitement and bustle in the lowland villages as the time for the departure of the flocks to the hills for the summer draws near. For some days previously the boys and girls go about singing a little song, of which the words are, "Ecco, vien' tosto il bel tempo della primavera, che s'inviano le giovenche sull' Alpe" ("Lo! the fine spring weather cometh when the stock is sent to the Alps"). One evening the hay harvesters arrive from the mountains with the news that the last snows have melted and the earth is green again on the high levels. At sunset on the same day, when all the people are gathered on the church steps, a herald advances and announces in a loud voice, "To-morrow morning we are off!" And at dawn the exodus begins.

On the high levels the routine of daily work is enlivened by a good deal of sport and horseplay. There are wrestling bouts, leaping matches, and competitions in the hurling of stones. Sometimes you would think an upland valley was inhabited by the souls of the damned, so loudly it re-echoes to discordant cries. But it is only the shepherds vieing with each other as to who can produce the loudest echo. The younger men play a more dangerous game. They climb on to the resilient branch of a tree, flex once, twice, to give themselves a good spring, and leap into the air, the winner being he who leaps highest. The danger consists in the tricks played by the old hands upon the greenhorns, of which the favourite is to place a number of sharp stones in the places where the jumpers are likely to fall. The result to trousers and epidermata can be imagined. Every Sunday during the early part of the summer season, and still more frequently as the winter approaches and the work of milking and cheesemaking lessens, there are feasts. A sheep is killed, hewed into quarters, and stewed in huge pots in water liberally diluted with strong brandy. After the food is eaten one of the company produces a kind of guitar and strums a dance, accompanying his instrument with voice and whistling.

His companions strike up the step with a great clattering of hob-nailed boots. The absence of ladies is partially atoned for by the herd-boys, who twist a scrap of coloured stuff round their heads and foot it as suppley and mincingly as any of the fair sex. Later on there are real girls, who have carried up fresh supplies from the villages below, and remain for the evening's dancing; and on the last night of all before the descent into the plain there is a perfect orgy of festivity, so pronouncedly more free and abandoned than the weekly *feste* that it has a name of its own, "Il Baccanale delle Alpi."

There are no great game estates in Italy, nor any game laws, but every man who can afford it takes out a gun licence, and in virtue thereof he may shoot over any property which is not enclosed by an impassable hedge. The preservation of game is so heavily taxed that nobody can afford it, and there is therefore very little game native to the country. Apart from hares and a few home-bred quails all the sport is afforded by birds of passage. In May there is a great shooting of the migratory quail as they arrive from Africa, and in September men wait up for the wild pigeon as they fly south. In winter there are a few ducks, snipe, and woodcock. But the humble thrush does duty as the chief game bird. His greed betrays him, for he is a confirmed olive eater, and cannot tear himself away as long as any fruit remains on the trees. The sportsman, therefore, makes a little hulk, or shelter, at the foot of some leafy tree at the edge of the orchard, and waits for the birds as they fly to it to perch after feeding. In the evening he ensconces himself at the border of a wood, and waits for them as they come in to roost. The victims have a ready sale and make excellent eating.

Until recently it was a common practice to hunt small birds at night with the *diavolaccio* or *pantera*. This is a round sieve whose wires are smeared with birdlime, and which is fixed to a long pole with a carbide flare lighted above it. One man carries this instrument, and two others go along a hedge and beat out the birds, which fly straight at the light, in their sudden scare, and are caught in the birdlime. So great was the destruction of bird-life caused by

this practice that it is now forbidden by law and punished with a heavy fine. The enthusiasm of the *carabinieri* to catch those guilty of it is stimulated by the prospect of receiving half the fine, so that the law is rigorously enforced, and there is some prospect that song-birds will no longer be a rarity in Italy in a few years' time.

There are still a few—a very few—coveys of red-legged grouse among the hills, but they are the kind of game that everybody talks of having shot at, and nobody ever brings home to the larder. Hares, however, really do exist, and the shooting of them is carefully organized. One man takes up a position with a gun upon a well-marked run, or upon an open road across which the hares are accustomed to pass. Another man with a dog goes along the ridge above and puts up the hares, which run down the hill away from him, and pass within range of the first man. The rule is that the bag shall be equally divided, so that if but a single hare is killed a judgment of Solomon is executed *in situ*. As a matter of fact, the usual bag is *nil*, so that there is no bad blood about its division.

The last topic with which I have to deal is that which makes the farmer a confirmed grumbler all the world over. The Italian is not more partial to taxes than the British, but he has been very much luckier. For though on paper he is liable to taxes innumerable, yet the whole system of land taxation is in such an indescribable muddle that he is generally either grossly under-assessed or easily able to evade being inconvenienced. For example, in that part of the country which formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Naples there are no survey maps at all, and therefore no data upon which to make individual assessments. In these districts taxes are paid upon a so-called assignment, a beautiful arrangement come to between the farmer and the taxation agent about a century ago, and never changed since, so that not only are the assessments ludicrously low, but the acreage is so diminished by "wangling" that to look at the taxation returns you would think that the country had miraculously shrunk to half its size. In the rest of Italy there are no

survey maps later than 1831, and the assessments are similarly ridiculous. Forty years ago a law providing for the making of new maps and assessments was passed but quietly scotched by backstairs influence, and it was not until two years ago that a new beginning was made. Considerable progress has been made with the new survey, and possibly by this year (1925) some order will have been produced out of chaos.

The system has already been vastly simplified, and the Italian farmer is now subject to only four taxes—land, income, house, and supplementary, the last being a round sum paid in lieu of all other pre-existing rates and taxes. This will greatly benefit agriculture, and, in particular, the abolition of death duties as between near relations will do much to preserve the unity and solvency of estates. There is some hope also that there will no longer be a premium on dishonesty. Formerly anybody who made a true return was automatically ruined, because the State invariably doubled the return, and informed the astonished citizen that it had done so because, of course, he had not returned his true income, and it wished to be on the safe side. The citizen replied by returning one-third of his income next time, and therefore did not mind much whether the assessment was doubled or not. This humorous game was played with the greatest goodwill on both sides, and with a cynical frankness such as I have only seen in rustic frontier districts where the smuggler takes a glass of wine in the local inn with the soldier who is about to chase him, both knowing perfectly well what the other is. The present Finance Minister is making a strenuous effort to break the vicious circle, and has partially, at least, succeeded. To those who asked him whether he intended to demand from the taxpayer additional sacrifices, he replied, " I ask him only the sacrifice of ceasing to defraud."

I am sadly conscious that no amount of description or cataloguing of facts can give to one who has never seen them any complete picture of the Italian *contadini*, of their sterling qualities and little weaknesses, of their rude and primitive life, and of their quaint psychology. Perhaps a little story

of an incident which actually happened to a friend of mine will be a fitting finish to this attempt, and reveal their simple nature more clearly than any wealth of additional detail. Last year my friend was walking in the country near Florence and met a *contadino* with whom she fell into conversation. She remarked upon the magnificent harvest prospects of the season. "Ah, yes, Signora," he replied, with a magnificent confusion between Nature and politics, "it is easy to see we have now a strong Government."

CHAPTER V

THE FUTURE OF ITALY

I REMEMBER once making the mistake of asking an American for his impressions of Rome. It was a mistake, because he would have volunteered them without my asking, and he might have been slightly less voluble without the encouragement. But the gist of half-an-hour's monologue was the following: "Rome? Why I guess that Rome is a rum burg. The citizen who showed me round was keen as candy on it. He fair swelled with pride, did little Cæsar. First he took me to a big heap of rubble in a public garden where the moth had got at the buildings. 'Here,' he said, 'Marcus Antonius made a speech two thousand years ago.' 'That so?' I said. 'Bully for Mark.' Then he piked off to a residential quarter where some guy had put up an elevator shaft without the hotel round it. 'Here,' he said, 'Julius Cæsar made a speech nineteen hundred years ago.' 'That's fine,' I said, 'Bully for Julius.' I give you my word, sir, that citizen visited a dozen locations that morning, and he never mentioned a single thing that had happened later than nineteen hundred years ago. Rome, sir? Rome's fierce." From all of which it may be judged that my friend was profoundly impressed with the antiquity of Rome.

But though Italy is indeed the oldest of European countries, her people were the youngest of the European nations until the peace treaties produced such a crop of national birthdays. And since it takes a very long time for a nation to grow up, Italy may be said to be hardly out of the nursery. It has taken us, for example, some one thousand years to evolve an approximately complete parliamentary system, and there will be found many unkind people to say that it is not much of a thing, even after it has been so painfully evolved. It

took Rome herself five hundred years to develop beyond the limits of a fair-sized parish. When, therefore, a nation has only been in being for fifty-four years it is very rash to prophecy what it may become ; and if I seem to pass too cold and pessimistic a judgment upon the prospects of Italy ever becoming a great nation I should like the reader to remember that to make the attempt is like prophesying the future of a boy who has just entered his preparatory school. One can note tendencies and aptitudes. One can take photographs and measurements. One can estimate resources and position ; but one cannot be sure of one's conclusions. In estimating whether a country be or be not great, there is only one sure test. It must be examined whether or not it influences the policy and life of its neighbours. If not, though it may produce individuals of genius, who contribute a rich offering to the knowledge and artistry of mankind, the nation as a whole cannot claim to be in the forefront of civilization's march.

Judged by this test Italy is not great, nor in all human probability will she ever become so. Politically speaking, in all the international arrangements so painfully being negotiated in the hope that peace may be something better than a name, she is in the position of a sleeping partner whose signature is valuable but not essential to a firm's contracts. Morally speaking, I can see little hope that the Italians can ever become a shining example to the world. They can see no virtue in the day of small things, and though they excel in little courtesies, their right hand always knows what their left is doing. Perhaps their drawbacks are best demonstrated by the exclamation of a Scotch gentleman of my acquaintance who called on the Almighty to explain what He had been thinking about when He gave such a country to such a people ; for both the vices and the virtues of the Italians are very perfectly calculated to annoy a Caledonian.

The chief weakness of the Italians is that they already think themselves a great nation, a mistaken opinion which leads them into an exaggeration of language and pose, and

exposes them to undeserved ridicule. There may be some who remember the Austrian parodies of the Italian war *communiqués* in the early days of the war, which ran somewhat as follows: "Our magnificent troops, with irresistible élan, hurled themselves upon the enemy, and triumphantly brought back one goat, a can of petrol, and a waterproof sheet." There was just enough truth in this travesty to make it spicy. And so it is to-day. If the Italians would say they were a great nation a little less and worked towards making themselves one a little more, they would not have to complain of the cavalier treatment of the nations with whom they sit in council on nominally equal terms.

Their second great drawback is their slimness—not physical, of course (far from it), but mental. International relationships are to them too much of a business deal, and honesty for honesty's sake is often forgotten in the desire to drive a good bargain. The temptation must be admitted. In the first place, every nation plays more or less for its own hand; and, secondly, Italy entered so late into the comity of "great nations" that she found the avenues of development already very crowded on every side. She wants colonies, for example, and she sees all the fertile undeveloped spots of the earth's surface under the Union Jack, or the French tricolour, and she is compelled (after a disastrous experience in Abyssinia) to be content with a pitiful strip of Somaliland, a tiny patch on the Red Sea (Eritrea), and a large but unfertile and imperfectly subdued area known as Libya. It is not humanly possible to settle more than a few hundred thousand whites in the whole of her possessions.

Until the Great War attention was somewhat distracted from this ambition by the duty of redeeming the Italian-speaking peoples still under Austrian rule; but during the past four years there has been much open, and still more secret, chafing at the barriers in the way of colonial empire. It is not, however, probable that it will ever develop into anything serious. Indeed, recently there has been a wise tendency to concentrate upon preserving the *italianita* of the emigrants settled abroad, of whom there are between eight

and nine millions. The idea is that since Italy herself cannot possess colonies she should forge every possible link between herself and those of her people who go to be citizens in the territories of other States. This indirect way of creating an empire is perhaps less ostentatious and satisfying, but also infinitely less expensive. It may, I think, be productive of very remarkable results, particularly in the South American Republics; and it would be curious if Italy one day cut out Spain as the patroness of the newer New World.

Again, if Italy wants to become a great sea power, she looks out from her harbours and sees the British fleet holding its autumn manœuvres and the French fleet resting at Toulon, both backed by financial resources far greater than she possesses herself; and, similarly, if she seeks to develop her mercantile marine she is faced with the fiercest competition.

Here, again, she has recently combined sensible action with unsensible talk. I remember seeing the U.S. battleship "Maryland" and the Italian dreadnought "Guilio Cesare" lying together in Naples Harbour, and hearing the crowd of spectators convincing themselves that the dreadnought was fully a match for the super-dreadnought, simply because the former was Italian. This idea may be shared by the naval staff, but it is not probable; for the Italians have pinned their faith to light cruisers and M.A.S. boats,[1] and consoled their pride by calling the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum*. They have made desperate efforts to assist their mercantile marine. There are huge schemes of dock construction for Naples, Venice, and Trieste. There are detailed agreements between the shipping companies and the emigration department; and there is an organized attempt to capture the Eastern carrying trade, which has met with some success, particularly in the Black Sea, where, by the treaty with Russia, the Italians have secured the right to a share even of the coastal traffic, such as it is.

In the sphere of aviation and the army the Italians also

[1] The tiny motor torpedo-boats that did such good service during the war. The idea is that their mobility and size will make them targets impossible to hit, and to a torpedo all things are possible.

find themselves in the aggravating position of being a first-class power without first-class resources. With regard to aviation, an enormously ambitious programme was none the less announced. By June of 1924 Italy was to have four thousand five hundred aeroplanes, divided into three classes in accordance with their use and serviceability. Actually she possessed at that date just over a thousand which would fly. As in most countries, there has been a great deal of talk about civil aviation, and elaborate schemes prepared, but nothing has materialized. As for the army, it has been thoroughly reformed on a short service basis, and the new idea is to *mecanize* it throughout, and concentrate upon tanks, motor transport, etc. The idea is admirable, if it is ever carried out, and rouses the greatest enthusiasm in the breast of its author, General di Giorgio.[1] And—just over the frontier is the greatest aerial and military power in the world!

I have sketched in these details of the Italian ideals and ambitions not in order to suggest that Italy desires to win her place in the world by force, but in order to show some of the difficulties in the way of her becoming a force to be reckoned with, and to placate the irritation of those ardent souls who cannot understand why she is not universally revered and valued as was the old Roman Empire. But in spite of a lot of loud talk she is not militaristic, and from that point of view she can never be a great power, for her resources do not admit of her being more than a respectable and a respected one.

It is only fair to say that with the one exception of the Corfu adventure, for which there was admittedly great provocation, she has cut her foreign policy according to her cloth. She has made a peace genuine, so far as in her lies, with all her neighbours, and has concluded a perfect library of commercial treaties with the remotest nations of the earth. If there is any substance in the wilder ambitions that are occasionally expressed, even in quarters high enough to

[1] Since the above was written the di Giorgio scheme of Army Reform has been rejected, and the whole question is again in a state of flux.

know better, such ambitions are probably harmless because the power to realize them in totally lacking.

When Italy has anything to bargain with, she uses it unsparingly—I had almost said unscrupulously. Her motto is " nothing for nothing," or, to use Salandra's phrase, she is full of *sacro egoismo*. Her present difficulty is that she has so little to bargain with, and therefore I ascribe the exaggerated language of the Italian Chauvinists to the mental process known as " kicking against the pricks." It is the echo of the vast hopes with which Italy entered the war, whose resonance is kept going by her profound conviction that the Allies have cheated her out of her due share of the war spoils because she has been edged out of Dalmatia and because she is not at Smyrna. It makes little difference that the literal enforcement of the Treaty of London would have meant the dismemberment of Jugo-Slavia and imposed upon Italy a morsel far more indigestible than Albania proved to be ; [1] or that the fact that the Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne [2] was never carried out is one to be remembered in the grateful prayers of every Italian.

To put the matter plainly, I should not personally trust the Italians an inch not to play for their own hand in any international complication. It is their traditional policy which has brought them to the respectable position they now occupy. But with regard to the affairs of Europe, though naturally it is morally valuable to have their support and co-operation, they are of far less importance than the Little Entente. And though fully admitting that their prestige abroad has greatly increased, I am certain it is founded upon impressions and not upon facts. Had Italy been able to carry out the idea which she pursued just after the war, and sacrificed many more immediate ambitions in order to become the patroness—or, better still, the outlying tentacle—of the Succession States, it would have been far otherwise. But,

[1] The reference is to the Italian defeat before and evacuation of Valona in 1919.

[2] Under which Italy was to have Smyrna and a large sphere of influence in southern Asia Minor. Had she gone there it would have been the Italian and not the Greek Army which would have been driven into the sea.

as it is, she is really politically isolated, and even the belated treaty [1] with Jugo-Slavia is wholly to the advantage of the latter.

The day is past when Italy can be Europe's bailiff in the Balkans.

If, however, as we must all, with the exception of certain disappointed generals, hope, and some of us may believe, the greatness of a nation is no longer to be measured by territory or armaments, it does not follow that because Italy cannot become a great military or colonial power that her future is dark. There are distinct signs of a tendency all over Europe to realize that economic boundaries must transcend political boundaries,[1] and it may be asked whether Italy has not a great future in the economic, even though she has only so modest a prospect in the political field.

It is really too early to speak with any certainty. The coal supplies of Italy are negligible, and her petroleum resources *nil*. As a compensation for the present lack of fuel she has unrivalled resources of water power, which are gradually being more and more fully utilized every year, and which at the moment generate sufficient electricity to run about fifty per cent of the factories in the North. But I have not the knowledge to check the rosy statements about the infinite capacity of this source of energy for development,

[1] By the so-called "Pact of Friendship" signed in January, 1924, both countries are pledged to neutrality in the event of either going to war, and each country is bound to support the other in the event of invasion. The practical result is to free Jugo-Slavia's hands in the day when her drive to the Ægean takes a practical form, and the second clause appears to be entirely formal, designed, in some sense, to mask the first. Moreover, the events which accompanied the recent (December, 1924) revolution in Albania clearly demonstrated the extent to which Italy has retired in favour of Jugo-Slavia as the political arbiter of South-eastern Europe. This revolution was proved beyond all doubt to have been abetted and aided by the Jugo-Slav authorities on the Albanian border, at the very moment when the Jugo-Slav Minister for Foreign Affairs was concluding with Signor Mussolini in Rome a solemn agreement for mutual non-intervention in Albania. On one day the Italian Press and Italian official circles were full of indignation, the next they blandly and blindly agreed to regard the invasion as a purely domestic Albanian affair. The incident is typical of the new orientation of Italian policy away from political ambitions and its concentration purely upon commercial development.

[1] There is, for example, no doubt that, whatever the future relations between Germany and France, the French and German industrials will continue to strain every nerve to co-operate.

and all that it is safe to say is that in some future age, when mankind is forced to rely upon the imperishable rather than the perishable sources of power, Italy will find herself singularly well equipped, and is already aware of the fact.

More serious, however, than her lack of fuel is the deficiency of the other two props of an industrial civilization—iron and corn. The supplies of the former are quite inadequate, the production being only a few thousand tons a year; and as for corn, the average consumption is over seventy million quintals, and the production varies from the sixty-one million quintals of a bumper year like 1923 to the forty-five millions of a poor year like 1924. These are very disturbing facts, for they mean that Italy is in no sense an economic unit, and cannot therefore develop an independent industrial civilization. In every way she is a consumer and not a producer of raw materials, and cannot therefore hope to compensate herself by economic prestige for her inferior position in the sphere of politics.

This brings me to the last and most interesting of the questions which any consideration of the future of Italy must raise: Has she produced a new political gospel? Has she a lesson to teach, and an example to give, in the organic structure of her State and the tendency of her political ideas? Is she like some famous *savant* who is no good as a soldier or a factory hand but nevertheless justifies his existence by the contributions he makes to the sum of human knowledge and philosophy?

Italy has attracted enormous attention and interest by the experiment, known as Fascismo, of which she has been the theatre. So much has been written of it, and so bitterly, that perhaps a balanced estimate of its significance is worth attempting. Political situations change very rapidly in Italy, and what is true to-day may be quite obsolete to-morrow; but at least it is always possible to define the general characteristics of this movement, and to estimate its place in history without committing oneself to prophecy.

A democratic system, drafted and imposed in five minutes, and extended at frequent intervals during fifty years, would

prove indigestible to any nation, and particularly to one of the mercurial and unstable temperament of the Italians—to one, moreover, which had lived for centuries under a patchwork of the most absolute autocracies as they had done. The movements of Arnold of Brescia, Stephen Porcari, Cola di Rienzi, and even Garibaldi himself, originated in sentimental broodings upon the old Roman Republic, which roused an echo in, but possessed no deep meaning nor message for, the hearts of the people. When, therefore, the whole country was united under a constitutional monarchy, almost every idea of such a system was foreign and unfamiliar.

I have made a passing allusion in Chapter I to the compromise which was arrived at, and explained how Italy, though nominally a democracy, remained up to the outbreak of war under a camouflaged dictatorship. First Cavour, then Crispi, and then Giolitti, in close liaison with the very able monarchs of the House of Savoy ruled Italy with a power whose absolute character was not affected by the occasional sops thrown to the professional politicians, such as extensions of the franchise or the appointment of some puppet as Prime Minister. So thorough was this camouflage that there has never been a Conservative Party in Italy.[1] With a magnificent disregard of their own opinions, people never called themselves less advanced than Liberals, and the variety of other titles of a more radical complexion still is legion. The system was carried to its extreme by Giolitti, who was perfectly ready to put on paper the most liberal laws, and to yield a titular precedence to one of his henchmen, but who, whether actually prime minister or not, invariably had the last say on every important matter, and politely extinguished the career of anyone who really opposed him.

The war put an end to the secret dictatorship of the prime minister and the court for two reasons. The first was that Giolitti was against intervention, because he saw the economic difficulties and the tremendous upheaval of new political forces which would ensue in Italy, and also the profitable

[1] It should be remembered that every patriot before 1870 was a Liberal, for to be a Conservative would have implied supporting the Austrian, Bourbon, or Papal rule.

rôle of *tertius gaudens* which she would abandon. He thought, with some reason, that it would be possible to induce Austria to satisfy all Italy's aspirations without actually fighting. His policy failed in the face of the fierce activities of the interventionists, and its betrayal by his own henchman Salandra, whom he had allowed to be prime minister. Giolitti permitted himself to be outwitted and his prestige was gone. On the very eve of Italy's declaration of war four hundred deputies had left their cards at his house in token of loyalty to his policy. Next day all but a handful were shouting loud applause of a policy diametrically the opposite. The fox of Dronaro retired in dudgeon to his earth, and with the disappearance of her guardian the political minority of Italy was over.

The second reason for the disappearance of the secret dictatorship is the retiring character of the other partner, the present King of Italy. No man in Europe hates kingship more, or longs more earnestly for a quiet life. This desire is too deeply rooted to be concealed, and though the king never fails in his duty, though his people are unchangeably loyalist, the influence of the Court on politics has insensibly declined almost to vanishing point.

The war, therefore, changed Italy from an infant to an adult. But her growing pains continued and threatened to turn into convulsions. The adolescent had tasted the wine of new things, and the fumes had mounted to heads which needed no additional irritant to become unbalanced. After a few months' exuberant expectation of the millennium the whole country swung over to the opposite extreme, and awaited in fearful suspense the advent of the Last Judgment.

The story of those unhappy years has frequently been told, and it is not my intention to repeat it, but merely to utter a warning against exaggerating the evils of those times. For it is not true that Italy was the prey of the Communists, nor is it accurate that her condition was becoming gradually worse from 1919 to 1922. On the contrary, the worst year was 1920, when, on the one hand, D'Annunzio was posturing at Fiume, and, on the other, the fatuous operatives at Turin

were in occupation of the factories. Giolitti was recalled to office to break both these extremes, by turning the poet out of Fiume and allowing him to forget his oath to die there, and by leaving the operatives strictly alone until starvation forced them to return to reason. Thereafter things were gradually on the mend. The budget deficit, which is one of the most accurate tests (or would be if the Italians had not a budgeting system of impenetrable complexity), amounted in 1920–21 to seventeen and a half milliards, but fell next year to fifteen and three-quarter milliards, and in 1922–23, three months of which falls outside the Fascist regime, it was only four and a half milliards. Moreover in the years 1920–21, 1921–22, about ten milliards should really be deducted from the deficit because they represent wholly extraordinary expenditure arising out of the war.

Nevertheless, the unsettled condition of the country, the persistence of inefficient, if not malignant, local administration, and, above all, the dangerous instability of the Central Government produced by the contending parliamentary groups, made the Fascist Revolution a valuable service rendered to Italy. On the credit side of the movement must be set down these facts : first, that it put an end to dreaming, and secondly that it put an end to the tyranny of inefficiency. But what it really did was to substitute another tyranny in nearly every respect exactly the same as the old concealed dictatorship. The differences were that it was more open, that the Court was merely a sleeping partner in it (a partner who has had frequent nightmares, be it remarked in passing), and that its authority was exercised not through the machinery of the State, Parliament, the Provincial and Communal Councils, the Army, and the Police, but through a party machinery of its own consisting of the " Duce," the Grand Fascist Council and its local acolytes, the *rasses* or local Fascist chieftains, and the National Militia formed out of the Blackshirt squadrons.

The people, from the king downwards, bent, more or less willingly, to the storm, and Fascismo found itself in almost undisputed mastery of the country. Around it grew up a

legend. Jack had climbed the beanstalk to power and killed the Socialist giant. His friends and their movement were looked upon as a portent, and Jack himself as a miracle whom less-favoured nations sighed to possess. This legend is as grossly exaggerated as that which represents Italy in 1919–22 as a bloody shambles, and the historian of fifty years hence will probably dismiss Fascismo in a line as an ephemeral episode. It had the chance to be something infinitely greater, to be a real body-building tonic to the Italian people. But in point of fact it has only been an emetic, to which, however, the merit must be accorded of having purged the body politic of a great number of poisonous particles.

With a free hand to reorganize and revivify the State, Fascismo set to work, and in all those matters which were not organically wrong it has wrought admirably. It has restored the State finances, reorganized the bureaucracy and made it work, and generally engendered a patriotic spirit which has done marvels for the fighting services. It has restored order and punctuality to the public services, and, thanks to the general impression of stability, unemployment is at a minimum (115,000 for the whole country), and trade is very prosperous. In so far as it was a revolt against inefficiency, Fascismo is therefore justified of its children, and has produced two men at least which any country would be proud to number among its citizens—Alberto di Stefani, Minister of Finance, and Luigi Federzoni, Minister of the Interior, formerly Minister for the Colonies. And yet the movement has missed greatness, and to-day there is not one found to rise up and call it blessed without qualification.

The reason is that though materially efficient it is morally rotten, and therefore has missed one of the greatest chances ever offered to a political movement. In all modern States it is numbers which count, and Fascismo in its rush to power trod on the bodies of countless rascals who rose up and rushed after it. Hundreds of thousands joined it from pure self-interest and have exploited its success in the same spirit. Many of them were men of brains, if not of character, and pushed their way through to high positions, which they have

not adorned. The result is that they cast upon even the honest men of their party the taint of their practices—the unscrupulous use of information for gambling on the Stock Exchange, the unhesitating use of position for the suppression of criticism and critics, and the organization of a local terrorism which must be seen to be believed. Very little was allowed to be said about these proceedings, and it was very unsafe to investigate them. A British journalist, for example, who visited the district of Molinella was arrested at the revolver point and taken to prison. She was laughed at for thinking there could be any dissatisfaction in the new Paradise. Two years later the facts came out, and Molinella was in every one's mouth as the place where the authorities had allowed a man wanted for murder to terrorize the whole district for months and to refuse work to any but Fascists.

The murder of the Socialist deputy Matteotti in June, 1924, broke this conspiracy of silence, and broke also the conspiracy of the gang in high places to rule Italy by such methods. One by one the recognized leaders fell from grace and out of a calculated obscurity. Rossi, Mussolini's right-hand man at the Home Office, and Marinelli, the spade-bearded secretary of the party, were arrested in connexion with the Matteotti murder. So also was the editor of the new Fascist paper, the " Corriere Italiano," whose machinery, if it did not turn out news for the public to read, turned out luxurious motor-cars for its staff to ride in. The paper collapsed like a pricked bladder and was no more seen. De Bono, Chief of Police, fell under grave suspicion of having favoured the accused, and after a diplomatic interval was retired, first from that office, and secondly from that of Generalissimo of the Militia ; with the solace of a letter from Mussolini and the promise of a governorship which was speedily forgotten by all but himself. Balbo rashly sued the " Voce Republicana " newspaper for libel, and found himself reading a letter of his own to some Ferrara Fascists instructing them to bludgeon certain opponents, and to warn off the judicial authorities on his responsibility. He wrote from Rome, he said, which was the proof that he knew what he

was saying. Giunta was cited by the procurator of Milan to answer to a charge of inciting and organizing the beating up of two Parliamentary candidates, and an awkward letter of his was published saying that he had Mussolini's authority for issuing such instructions. Not one of the leaders, old or young, but had some unpleasant action to account for.

No doubt they felt very aggrieved, and with reason; for the catalogue of the preceding paragraph is not intended to show the exceptional actions of a few men, but to represent the sort of action which was part and parcel of the Fascist spirit. These men had the right to say, "What have we done but follow the methods which brought us to power in order to keep ourselves there? What have we done but assert our sole right to govern Italy?" And it is just because the fundamental claim of Fascismo was wrong, and wrong-headed, that the Fascists missed their chance to become modern Samurai, a caste ruling a nation by the acknowledged merit of their hearts, not by the acknowledged strength of their hands. They mistook the power to govern for the right to govern, and, as a result, changed the laws to suit themselves instead of to suit the people. Side by side, therefore, with the flowers of the immense good which they wrought materially sprang up the poisonous weeds of a terrible moral wrong to Italy—the wrong of supposing her people incapable of self-government and unworthy of liberty.

The Fascists have behaved like arrant cads, and it is hard to credit them with what they have done in the face of one's disgust at what they are.

Never has a movement been more closely identified with one man than Fascismo with Mussolini. He faithfully reflects all its virtues and all its vices, the more brilliantly because both are the more easily distinguished in the individual than in the mass. The ordinary conception of him is that of a man born in humble circumstances, a bit of a Socialist, no doubt, but hallowed by the fire of a war in which he believed, and mellowed by success into a wise leader of the sane forces of ordered progress. The truth is far more complicated. That Mussolini has risen from the position of a blacksmith's

son, that he is a self- and well-educated man, and that he has the native force to dominate his followers by sheer character and impose the legend of his conversion and wisdom upon millions who have never seen him, are facts all to his credit; but possibly his would have been a more honourable place in history had he remained the red-hot Socialist of his youth.

What are the facts of his political career? He was turned out of Switzerland and Austria for revolutionary propaganda —not racial but political. As lately as June, 1914, he was running a Red Republican agitation—which approximated as near as he could make it to a revolution—in the Romagna. He was editor of the extreme Socialist paper the "Avanti," and for two months after the outbreak of war he was strongly against Italy's intervention. "The Idea Nazionale," he wrote, on September 13th, 1914, "calls for Italy to enter the war because it will strengthen the prestige of the dynasty, the Army, and the State. That is precisely why we do not want the war, because we want to destroy the prestige of the dynasty, the Army, and the State."

In November, 1914, came the sudden change of Mussolini from a revolutionary to a soldier—a change about which it is permissible to speculate but unkind to talk. Let it be remembered only that his conversion was real enough to take him actually into battle, and if he retired therefrom, it was with honourable wounds. During the remainder of the war-period the Allied cause in Italy commanded no more pungent or consistent pen. Mussolini still professed an ostensible socialism, but in fact he had thrown over the whole theory directly his expulsion from the Socialist Party closed to him any opening for a career among its ranks, and his new socialism was hardly more than that sympathy for the poor which is professed by every decent Conservative. He had several pegs upon which to hang the garments of a zealous convert, notably his idea, often expressed in his Socialist days, that Italy could never be truly Socialist until she was truly Italian, in other words, until she embraced the Italian-speaking populations outside her then borders. This gave him the chance to join the Nationalist movement without too flagrant

an apostasy, and brought him to that co-operation with D'Annunzio out of which sprang Fascismo itself. For while the poet was posturing far away at Fiume, Mussolini remained near at home at the head of the pro-D'Annunzio propaganda. He devoted the whole of his immense energy and organizing ability to the task, with the result that willy-nilly (but probably willy) he supplanted the poet as the embodiment of the Nationalist ideal in the eyes of the vulgar.

He was full of attractive ideas—a sinister, dare-devil, uniform; strange cries and songs; peculiar gestures, and exciting titles. The funds came from the industrialists, and from a politely enforced levy upon all persons of property. The arms were obtained by the connivance of the Central Government, which in its feeble perplexity could think of nothing better than the perfectly Italian idea of dividing the nation into two warring camps in the hope that the two extremes would mutually destroy each other, and the débris, in some miraculous fashion, re-erect themselves into a temple of moderation. It was therefore at the head of a hotchpotch of gross materialists and fanatical idealists, inspired by the basest egotism and the purest altruism, equipped by spontaneous giving and subterranean blackmail, working by *beaux gestes* and baneful brutalities, that Mussolini arrived, where he had always intended to arrive, in Power.

Since that time the man has demonstrated in his own character exactly the same mixture of good and evil as existed in the sources, the ambitions, and the personnel of his following. He is, in the first place, fundamentally vulgar. The fact bursts through during the course of the simplest conversation and leads to a jarring grossness of expression which mars his otherwise magnificent oratory. It has always seemed to me typical of the man that his wife and family are tucked away in some obscure corner—I do not even know where, and I doubt if one per cent of Italy is wiser—while he lords it in Rome. On the other hand, he is not dishonest so far as money is concerned, and is satisfied with an extremely modest manner of living.

Much has been written of his strength, but in reality he

is not so much strong as violent, subject to unreasoning explosions of rage and fits of vacillation, such as are usually remarkable only in weak men. A memorial, written by Cesare Rossi just before his arrest, details in a manner which bears the imprint of truth the way in which Mussolini's passionate outbursts embarrassed the moderates among his entourage and encouraged the extremists to organize the assaults which have so disgraced the Fascist regime. He may, in his calmer moments, perceive that violence does not always pay, and this may be the reason for the curious alternations of repression and conciliation which have characterized his conduct towards his political opponents; but on the most charitable view he has never had the courage to suppress the extremists of his own party, and the truth most probably is that he had never wanted to because they are in accord with his own predisposition to violence. And when faced with any serious internal difficulty he shows a perturbed imbecility which is astonishing. The Press is sequestered—as if that were not the best proof to the people of a sense of guilt in the suppressor; prefects are dismissed or transferred, as if a change of political officer could produce the slightest effect upon public opinion; and Mussolini himself seeks to restore his damaged prestige with some such perfectly absurd announcement as that he knows exactly what he is going to do for a year to come.

To judge from his conduct in a crisis would be unfair, for the man would have to be set down as a weak posturer, and he is more than that. He has, for example, great personal courage and personal magnetism, the latter due, I think, chiefly to the soft seductiveness of his beautiful speaking voice. Moreover, though he has never had any cohesive and comprehensive policy as he would have the world believe, he possesses all the shrewdness of the Italian peasant which enables him to see the material reforms which are wise and useful without shrinking from the difficulties of executing them. Even his repressive measures are not entirely stupid, for they may be a deliberate gamble upon his knowledge of the Italian character, his belief, often expressed with a cynical

frankness, that the people possesses an indefinite capacity to submit to tyranny, and that their strongest political sentiment is that dislike of trouble, which the Italians themselves aptly define as " the fear of fear."

On the whole, not a great man, but certainly an interesting one, who has created something too big for him to control, and which yet could not exist for a day without him. In the hour of his fall, when Italy balances his accounts, it is to be hoped that she will not forget the intense energy which he has devoted to her material welfare, and that she will temper her exasperation against the despot by the consciousness of her debt to the man.

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